

MIKE BARTLETT

Plays: Two

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Earthquakes in London | Love, Love, Love
The Enemy | 13 | Medea after Euripides

Mike Bartlett

PLAYS: TWO

Earthquakes in London
Love, Love, Love
The Enemy
13
Medea

Introduced by the author



NICK HERN BOOKS

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Introduction

Mike Bartlett

I've resisted writing introductions to plays. Like many writers, I felt that I didn't want to explain or add anything beyond that which could be found in the texts themselves. However, while reading during the recent Covid-19 lockdown, I realised that what I did find interesting was accounts of how writers *found* their plays – where the ideas had come from. So that's what I'll try to recount here, if it's of interest. If it is *not* of interest, which is a distinct possibility, then I fully suggest skipping this introduction and carrying straight on to the plays. They will hopefully speak for themselves, and if they don't, then probably no introduction will help anyway.

* * *

Between 2007 and 2009 I'd had my first three plays professionally produced: *My Child*, *Artefacts* and *Contractions*. These were all short, with a few central characters, and very condensed in their form. However, over this period, I had also written a number of other plays, which were different in two ways: firstly, they were longer, with many characters and a greater scale, and secondly, they were, quite rightly, rejected. Perhaps if I describe them briefly, you might see why. One was called *A Thin Place Between Heaven and Earth*, about Prince William visiting the Scottish island of Iona after university before embarking on his royal destiny. Another, *Fortress*, a three-act, confusing piece of work about a British soldier returning from war suffering from PTSD and with an unreliable memory (leading sadly to an equally unreliable plot). There were a couple of others, neither any better. I clearly had a desire to write bigger ideas on a larger scale but had not yet found a way of making a play like that coherent. Looking back I think I was writing on instinct alone, without enough planning, and while this creative energy could sustain smaller ideas, larger concepts seemed to fall apart across the greater duration of the play, the ideas and interest failing to hold.

However, in 2009 Ben Power, then Associate Director of Headlong Theatre, approached me to consider writing a play for them. Along with Rupert Goold, the Artistic Director, Headlong had established a reputation for new plays and revivals that felt contemporary, large-scale and asked intelligent, relevant questions of the audience. They had just produced Lucy Prebble's astonishing play *Enron*, which I'd loved. In our first meeting, Ben said they wanted me to write a play where I did all the things I thought I wasn't allowed to do: a large cast, with a big idea, on a grand scale. He asked if I had any ideas. As often when asked this in meetings, the truthful answer was no. But I knew that I wanted to write about climate change next, in some form, and I had at least thought of a title for it: *Earthquakes in London*. I didn't know anything else at that point, but they decided it was enough to commission me and I went off to make a start. I decided that perhaps the solution to writing it successfully would be to plan it carefully, and also to take every new idea I had for the next six months, and throw it into the plan. To just assume it was part of this larger whole.

Therefore, as I read about James Lovelock, I thought about an old man isolated in Scotland, towards the end of his life. I had an image of a character walking through London, a well-meaning but compromised politician in a moment of crisis, a young disempowered activist. I visited the shop Liberty for the first time and had a crisis of my own, related to the prices – that went in. As well as an older woman in the park, being nostalgic. All these small ideas were brought together through the emerging plan, and eventually I delivered a very long and unwieldy play to Headlong. Ben and Rupert loved the ambition at least, and we got to work redrafting. Around that time, Nick Hytner, Artistic Director of the National Theatre, saw my play *Cock* at the Royal Court Theatre, and asked to read the next thing I was working on. I sent him *Earthquakes* and with the speed of response playwrights only dream of, he called me three days later, said he loved it and wanted the National to produce it. Which they did, in the Cottesloe Theatre (now the Dorfman).

Looking at an early draft now, it's rough, but crucially, I had found the spirit and the metaphor of the play: the idea of a Weimar-style cabaret just before the end of days. Of living and dancing, shouting and making love *now* because our time is limited. And through all the gloom inevitable in the subject matter there are embers of hope: in the growing consciousness and

love of the sisters for each other. In the humour and compassion throughout. And ultimately in the young girl who decides at the very end to walk to London, with a message that the world needs to hear – that she demands a future. One of the aspects that Ben and Rupert pushed on, and which I think about a lot with larger plays now, is that one should focus less on what you want the play to say, and more about finding the right questions to ask. For *Earthquakes*, these were questions of legacy, responsibility and freedom, in the face of super-charged capitalism and an advancing and devastating climate emergency.

I also wanted the form of the play to reflect the excess of the culture. I wrote in a stage direction, it should be ‘too much’, and in the astonishing production Rupert gave it, designed by Miriam Buether, it really was. A catwalk flowed through the auditorium. Audience members could stand around it, or sit at barstools right up to it. At either end were two small end-on stages. Scenes flowed and overlapped, with big musical numbers, light, mess, chaos, costume, physicality and joy. Rupert, as a director – in a very charming way – pushes on every aspect of the production to be better. And that was true of the script. It was reshaped, added to, cut down and rewritten throughout the whole process. A very different experience to the careful respect for the ‘text’ that I had experienced at the Royal Court, and it wouldn’t help every play, but this huge patchwork needed wrestling into shape, and the whole thing eventually began to cohere into one story. The phenomenal playwright Tony Kushner once wrote in an essay about some plays being like lasagne – everything thrown in and bursting, on the brink of collapse, but just about holding their shape. This felt like that.

* * *

Around the same time I was writing *Earthquakes*, I was also under commission to Paines Plough, a new-writing touring theatre company run by James Grieve and George Perrin, who with their previous company – nabokov – had produced *Artefacts* (my first professional commission). They had commissioned a follow-up play from me with the Drum in Plymouth. As this was going to be a touring show they had sheepishly asked that it have a small cast and minimal production requirements. I reassured them that the request was completely reasonable. A writer was a grown-up professional, and should be able to tailor a play to the

circumstances of the production. I went on to claim that these restrictions could even inspire creativity. However, despite the talk, once again I had no ideas and the commission was now overdue. I had a spare week and I had to write something.

So each day I went to the café near my flat in Kilburn and wrote all day. Then I brought it home where my girlfriend generously read it. On the Monday I can't remember what I wrote but she said it was pretty bad. On the Tuesday I wrote a dialogue about students in Plymouth talking, contrasted with their parents having a conversation about them. This was also deemed, correctly, not great, but there was a theme emerging, about baby boomer parents sitting in big houses with lots of money, and their children, unable to buy, or even rent, a house and struggling. On the Wednesday I thought about where those parents had started. What were their opportunities and dreams, and how had those been disappointed, or corrupted? So I began to write about when those parents met, in the heady sixties. By the end of the Wednesday I had written a large chunk of the first act, with Henry and Kenneth waiting for Sandra, and this time, fortunately, my girlfriend liked it and wanted to know what happened next.

Unfortunately, when it was eventually finished, it had a cast of five, was over two hours long and needed three completely different sets. Despite this complete failure to adhere to the brief, James Grieve, who was to both produce and direct it, read it overnight, declared he didn't know quite how they would do it but he loved it and knew that they *would* do it. (This was a characteristic reaction from James. His work with George Perrin commissioning and producing a whole generation of playwrights and artists is incredible – but that deserves a book in itself.) Over the next two years the play toured the country twice, before transferring to the Royal Court. I loved how, in performance, particularly in the final act, the play would split the audience between the boomers and their children. When Rose asked her parents to buy her a house, the older members of the audience laughed at this as a self-satirising joke; their children, on the other hand, saw it as a completely sincere, outraged cry for justice that the whole play built towards.

* * *

For my generation, in Britain, 9/11 had been a pivotal and formative moment. We had grown up in an unusually stable decade, since 1989 and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Philosophers had declared history dead, New Labour had appeared to discover a way to have social justice and a thriving economy, and as technological development began to accelerate, with the internet and mobile phones, we naively and incautiously had every reason to believe that the world would continue to improve. For those privileged enough to benefit from all this, progress began almost to be taken for granted. Then the planes crashed into the towers. The first many of us knew about it was when we received a text message, as I did, that simply read 'Turn on the TV'. For me, once that news was on, everything else was cancelled, and I sat on the sofa that day and late into the night with some friends (I was in student accommodation in Leeds), all of us wondering if more planes would crash into other buildings the next day; if this was the start of a Third World War.

Ten years later, Headlong were creating a collaborative project, *Decade*, to mark the tenth anniversary of 9/11. They approached a number of writers to create short plays, which they would then curate into an evening of work. I had been evasive, unwilling to commit until I had a good idea, but they needed to know soon if I would be contributing. My current excuse to avoid writing it, in May 2011, was that I was in Mexico, for the opening of a production of my play *Cock*. But the truth was, away from my daily routine, I had time to write, I just couldn't think of a useful contribution that would somehow deal with the enormity of the event, or indeed, channel the feelings of tragedy on the day. Having pretty much given up, I checked my phone, and 9/11 was in the news again. Osama bin Laden had, after ten years, been tracked down and killed by American Special Forces. I began thinking about who the actual man was, that fired the fatal shot. How his name would almost certainly be withheld, but how it would utterly change his life, and one day probably be revealed.

Then I remembered a form for an unfinished play I had experimented with years before, where each line was only one or two syllables long. It made for an edgy, staccato rhythm, indicating characters that were a mix of very confident, and yet mistrustful of each other. Mixing this content and form I wrote the play, now called *The Enemy*, and sent it off. Rupert, and the project's co-director, Robert Icke, liked it, and the almost athletic challenge

it set for the actors. The final production was fluid and moving, a real mix of voices and opinions, and as emotional as it was intellectual. And if perhaps it failed to completely capture the effect of 9/11 on our culture, that was an accurate reflection of our continued trauma and confusion about it.

* * *

In 2011, I had been asked to become writer-in-residence at the National Theatre. It was a unique opportunity to be part of the work of the building, and in response I wanted to try to write something that could go on in the same year – that could speak to the moment. Therefore, together with Ben Power, who was now an associate director at the National, we devised a plan where an autumn slot would be kept free in the Olivier until the summer. If at that point I had written something of worth, then we'd do it. If not, they would do a revival instead. My starting point was religion. I'm not religious myself, but it's been a big part of my life. My grandfather was a United Reformed Church minister and a conscientious objector in the Second World War, my mother is a lay-preacher, and I took an A level in Religious Studies. Despite never being a believer, I have always been fascinated by its centrality to culture, politics and identity. By 2011 this subject had, probably charged by 9/11, become a major point of public discussion. Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett had a number of debates on the subject. Hitchens had written a bestselling book *God Is Not Great*. At the same time, there felt like a growing dissatisfaction amongst younger adults. Disappointed by the government, especially the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition, they were protesting again, beginning to demand a voice, in a way that had not been seen perhaps since the sixties. I attempted to write about this in a magical-realist mode, as a movement of young people drawn to London through following a central figure, an everyman called John. I wanted to explore the power of this, but also its danger. Who gets to play God? The play was called *13* and reading it now I notice I got a number of things right – there was indeed an energetic desire of a new generation to question the assumptions of their parents and grandparents, to fight for social justice and to defy the, by then commonplace, doctrine that the youth were apathetic and lazy. But I got the battleground wrong. In the play it was physical public protest and religion. It became clear only a few years after *13* was

produced that a new generation's revolution would in fact be about social media, identity and equality.

The production was staged in the Olivier Theatre, directed by Thea Sharrock and with an astounding design by Tom Scutt. As with *Earthquakes*, I wrote and rewrote almost continuously, taking notes all the time. I wanted the form to be like a meeting – a religious gathering – for which the curved amphitheatre of the Olivier seemed appropriate. But this time something didn't quite cohere. Whether the play needed more work in terms of form, whether it was the theatre or the production, or some combination, I'm not sure. The individual parts of the play – performances, design and some of the scenes – landed fantastically, but as a whole the 'lasagne' proved a little too close to collapse.

While the play just about worked with audiences, critically it was a failure. I was lucky that I had other projects to move on to, but at that point my biggest profile work had been a failure, and it certainly knocked my confidence. It has never been professionally revived, but what has been amazing to see has been the number and quality of drama-school productions of the play; it is quite possibly my most performed play in terms of amateur productions. Something in the play speaks to the generation it was written about, and they perform it with passion and authenticity. And that's a lesson that I remember now – that plays (and in fact television) can travel and grow, and that although a lot of the attention is on the opening night of the first production, that may not end up being where the work finds the most meaning. If they have some value culturally, the core ideas can sustain and grow over time.

* * *

...which links very well to *Medea*. This play arose because I wanted to direct something again. I had originally wanted to become a director after university and had assisted on a few productions. But I was a keen but rather insecure presence at the time, and those are not ideal qualities in a director. Instead I found myself writing and had been happy doing so ever since. But while working on *Earthquakes in London*, Rupert Goold had spotted that I was drawn to all the aspects of production and suggested I read some of the Greek classics. *Medea* stood out for me – a central

character that demanded to be heard, but who one could not entirely pin down. Of all the classic plays I read, it felt the most contemporary and pressing. Once I had started to work on it, I read about women who had been betrayed, who were then driven to extreme actions, taking matters into their own hands in pursuit of a justice they were lacking. My approach was to try to be very faithful to Euripides in terms of intention and form, but to translate it in terms of time and setting, to see what I discovered. The element that came to define the character was Medea's denial to be simply the victim. She refused to be pitied or left behind. Instead, alone, she demanded justice for her children, and also for herself.

Once I had a draft we began to move towards production, where I would be directing my own work for the first time. Rachael Stirling came in to read; seemingly effortlessly she found the meeting point of the classic and the contemporary. She was witty, scathing and deeply moving. The design, by Ruari Murchison, was a cross-section of a new-build house. The production opened at the Citizens Theatre in Glasgow, a perfect setting with its history of making classic plays both avant-garde and accessible. It then toured, and as it was performed, we found two things. Firstly, that when school groups came, young women in particular would love it, especially the character of Medea herself. Afterwards they would wait in groups in the foyer for Rachael to appear and then descend on her, keen to show their appreciation but also to carry on the conversation the play had started.

The other thing we noticed was that we couldn't get the end right – with the murder of the child. We reconceived it when we toured to Watford and it was better, but still it felt like an anticlimax. The horrific gesture just didn't feel right. In that final action Medea somehow became pathetic rather than glorious, her 'justice' psychopathic rather than meaningful. She became deeply unusual rather than an everywoman. Perhaps this was because that's the one element of the play that *is* very unusual. Women everywhere are betrayed and dismissed, but they hardly ever kill their children.

Perhaps the audience sensed that. *Medea* came third in the original play competition that it was part of in Ancient Greece. The first and second place plays are lost unfortunately, but I wonder now if this has always been the problem? After a thrilling and truthful unfolding of the drama, the ending was (uncharacteristically for Euripides) unbelievable, and the reason? Not the deus ex machina or the flying chariot in the sky, but

because at the last moment she had become a misogynist trope – simply, the mad woman. I was learning the very difficult balance with adaptation: one must be faithful, but critical too.

Despite the troublesome finale, the play did well. It never transferred to London as perhaps we hoped, but in the audience when it came to Watford were Roanna Benn and Jude Liknaitzky, who worked for a television production company called Drama Republic. A discussion of the play led us to wonder what a television drama version might be. Two years later we were making *Doctor Foster*, a BBC One drama series about another woman betrayed by her husband. This followed the outline of *Medea* relatively closely, but now I had learnt my lesson. Instead of killing her son, she protects him, and the series ended with her, not unscathed, but in triumph. The final episode was watched by ten million people. As I write now in 2022, the series has been broadcast in over twenty countries and remade in ten different versions across the world. So, again, the opening night in Glasgow in 2012 wasn't the complete meaning. It was only the beginning of an idea, or maybe a character, starting to find its audience.

A Note on Collaborators

Writing this introduction it's noticeable that the same names come up repeatedly. This is reflective of one of the most enjoyable things about theatre: collaboration, and one of its best aspects as a community: support. Some of this collaboration and support came from more senior established figures in the industry – over this period, for me: Rupert Goold and Nicholas Hytner. Other collaboration and support came from peers, who I'd known since we were starting out in our twenties: James Grieve, Thea Sharrock and Ben Power. But the thing that has linked them has been a sustained belief in me as a writer, not just for the next play, but in the long run. I never had the feeling from any of them that the relationship with me was contingent on the success of the next play. And that's how one feels able to take risks. I felt that if I made a mistake, either artistically or politically, that they would stand behind what we had made together. The Royal Court Theatre used to have a policy – perhaps they still do – where for new writers they wanted to encourage, they would sit them down on the morning of the press night, and offer them the next commission –

deliberately *before* the critics had given their verdict. This is a precise illustration of the support I'm talking about.

Looking back, all of the plays in this book were created in a time before the culture was revolutionised by social media specifically constructed to encourage division. Making work now, if we are to keep pushing on both form and content, the 'right to fail' is much more important than ever, and in theatre the most important aspect of this is the right to fail *together*. We need to support each other (and that means me, as a writer, supporting the director as well) on seemingly ridiculous, unfashionable and genuinely countercultural projects, in the hope that they might spark something new, or at least of value, to the audience.

EARTHQUAKES IN LONDON

Acknowledgements

This play could not have been written without Elyse Dodgson, Jonathan Donahoe, Clare Lizzimore, Rachel Wagstaff, Duncan Macmillan, the cast and production team, and particularly Miriam Buether, Rupert Goold and Ben Power.

Earthquakes in London was first performed in the Cottesloe auditorium of the National Theatre, London, on 4 August 2010, in a co-production with Headlong Theatre. The cast was as follows:

MARINA	Lucy May Barker
TOM	Gary Carr
YOUNG ROBERT	Brian Ferguson
GRACE / RECEPTIONIST / JOGGER	Polly Frame
SIMON / ROY	Tom Godwin
COLIN	Tom Goodman-Hill
CARTER	Michael Gould
PETER	Bryony Hannah
BUSINESSMAN / DANIEL / STUDENT	
/ DR HARRIS / BARMAN	Clive Hayward
MRS ANDREWS	Anne Lacey
SUPERMARKET WORKER / YOUNG	
MAN / TIM	Syrus Lowe
FREYA	Anna Madeley
ROBERT	Bill Paterson
JASMINE	Jessica Raine
CASEY / OLD WOMAN / SALLY /	
LIBERTY	Maggie Service
STEVE	Geoffrey Streatfeild
SARAH	Lia Williams

All other parts played by members of the company

This version of *Earthquakes in London* was first performed at Theatre Royal Plymouth on 22 September 2011, in a Headlong Theatre and National Theatre co-production. The cast was as follows:

SIMON / ROY / WWII OFFICER /	
POLAR BEAR / PASSERBY 1	Ben Addis
UNDERSTUDY / DANCE CAPTAIN	Sam Archer

PETER / MOTHER
TOM
COLIN
MARINA / MOTHER / UNDERSTUDY
STEVE
MRS ANDREWS
SARAH
JASMINE
SUPERMARKET WORKER / CASEY /
OLD WOMAN / LIBERTY / MOTHER
CARTER / DANIEL / POLICE OFFICER
/ DR HARRIS
ROBERT
GRACE / RECEPTIONIST / MOTHER /
JOGGER
YOUNG ROBERT / BUSINESS MAN /
SCAMMER / BAR MAN / DR TIM /
PASSERBY 2
FREYA

Helen Cripps
Kurt Egyiawan
Seán Gleeson
Siubhan Harrison
John Hollingworth
Maggie McCourt
Tracy-Ann Oberman
Lucy Phelps

Nicola Sangster

Gyuri Sarossy
Paul Shelley

Natalie Thomas

Joseph Thompson
Leah Whitaker

All other parts played by members of the company

Director
Set Designer
Costume Designer
Lighting Designer
Music
Projection Designer
Choreographer
Sound Designer
Company Voice Work

Rupert Goold
Miriam Buether
Katrina Lindsay
Howard Harrison
Alex Baranowski
Jon Driscoll
Scott Ambler
Gregory Clarke
Jeannette Nelson

Project developed for Headlong by Ben Power

The creative team for the 2011 UK tour included

Director: Caroline Steinbeis; Associate Set Designer: Lucy Sierra; Lighting Designer: Tim Mitchell; Associate Projection Designer: Emily Harding; Associate Projection Designer: Paul Kenah; Associate Choreographer: Steve Kirkham

Characters

ROBERT
GRACE
FREYA
STEVE
TOM
JASMINE
SARAH
SIMON
COLIN
SUPERMARKET WORKER
CASEY
PETER
CARTER
BUSINESSMAN
MANY STUDENTS
MRS ANDREWS
DANIEL
ROY
MANY SWIMMERS
FIFTEEN MOTHERS WITH
PUSHCHAIRS
OLD WOMAN
SECOND WORLD WAR
OFFICER
YOUNG MAN
BARMAN
MARYNA
RECEPTIONIST
TIM
WAITER
SMOKING MAN
COMMUTERS

LIBERTY
BUSKER
POLAR BEAR
EMILY
JOGGER
PASSERBY 1
PASSERBY 2
OTHER PASSERSBY
POLICE OFFICER
NARRATOR
YOUNG ROBERT
DR HARRIS
NURSE

STREET PERFORMERS
TOURISTS
MARCHING BAND
NEWSPAPER SELLER
USHERS

Note on the Text

The play is presented using as much set, props and costume as possible. The stage should overflow with scenery, sound, backdrops, lighting, projection, etc. Everything is represented. It is too much. The play is about excess, and we should feel that.

Scenes crash into each other impolitely. They overflow, overlap. The production should always seem at risk of descending into chaos but never actually do so.

(/) means the next speech begins at that point. (–) means the next line interrupts.

(...) at the end of a speech means it trails off. On its own it indicates a pressure, expectation or desire to speak.

A line with no full stop at the end indicates that the next speech follows on immediately.

A speech with no written dialogue indicates a character deliberately remaining silent.

Blank space between speeches in the dialogue indicates a silence equal to the length of the space.

ACT ONE

Prologue

1968.

Cambridge.

Black and white.

ROBERT CRANNOCK *is on a date with GRACE, who is wearing a floral dress. They eat. ROBERT is awkward.*

‘In the Year 2525’ by Zager and Evans is playing quietly in the background.

ROBERT I’m sorry if the letter was too forward.

GRACE I liked the letter.

ROBERT I got carried away, I’m sorry.

GRACE No.

ROBERT I didn’t mean to sound strange.

GRACE It wasn’t strange. I liked it. Love letters in my pigeonhole.
Romantic.

What do you do Robert? I mean I know you’re a
postgraduate, but what exactly do you... do.

ROBERT I’m doing a doctorate

GRACE In?

ROBERT Atmospheric conditions on other planets.

GRACE Other planets? Like aliens?

ROBERT Some of the work is to do with finding life yes.

GRACE Like *Star Trek*?

ROBERT Well... NASA are interested, so –

GRACE You're joking?

ROBERT No.

GRACE NASA?

ROBERT Yes.

GRACE Wow.

ROBERT Yes.

GRACE Wow.

ROBERT ...

GRACE So how do you know? If there's life?

ROBERT Well, all life gives off excretions of some kind. Gases, minerals.

GRACE We all give off gases?

ROBERT Yes.

GRACE Even girls?

ROBERT And all these gases –

GRACE Have you / researched this?

ROBERT These excretions, from all of these creatures, they go up into the atmosphere, and you can imagine globally they would make quite a difference to its composition. So it follows that if we could accurately measure the composition of gases in the atmosphere of a planet like Mars, we could tell whether there was life.

GRACE And?

ROBERT What?

GRACE Is there?

ROBERT We don't know.

GRACE Oh.

ROBERT We haven't done it yet. Not enough funding.

GRACE Right.

ROBERT But as I say, NASA are interested.
She looks at him.

GRACE So all the time, every bit of life, animals, humans, everything, change the environment.

ROBERT Yes. You are right now. The room is entirely different because you're in it.

GRACE You think?

ROBERT Doesn't matter what I think. The atmosphere in this room is completely dependent on how much you move, whether you talk, if you've got a cold, how hot you are.

GRACE How hot I am?

ROBERT Yes. Imagine if we all came in with a fever, the room would get much hotter, and then we'd get even hotter as a result, our fever would get worse and the room would become hotter in turn and so on and so on, upwards and upwards.

GRACE Hotter and hotter.

ROBERT Exactly.
Sorry. Wittering on. Supposed to be a date. I like your dress.

GRACE No, Robert, you've raised a very important question.

ROBERT Really?

GRACE Yes. How hot do you think I am?

ROBERT How hot?

GRACE How. Hot.

ROBERT Well... Oh.
You mean...

GRACE It's 1968. It's the summer. We're young. We can do what we want.

ROBERT *puts his hand on her forehead. She smiles.*

ROBERT Above average.
She smiles, and puts her hand on his head.

GRACE Boiling.
So what happens now?
They look at each other.
‘In the Year 2525’ plays – gets louder. Cross-fade scene and music into –

Proper Coffee

2010

A kettle boils.

FREYA’s face isolated. FREYA is singing along to a cover of ‘In the Year 2525’ by Venice Beat feat. Tess Timony. She loves it.

She sings some more.

We see FREYA. She is pregnant, wearing a man’s shirt and making coffee in her kitchen. She has headphones on and dances. A television is on as well.

Everything is done in rhythm – coffee, kettle... sugar... eats a spoonful herself.

We see STEVE in the shower. He hears her singing – bemused.

STEVE Freya?

FREYA keeps on singing.

Freya!

FREYA sings a bit more then takes a headphone out. The music is quieter.

FREYA What?

STEVE What are you / singing?

FREYA I'm making coffee.

STEVE What?

FREYA Coffee! Do you want some?

STEVE Proper coffee?

FREYA It's always proper coffee.

STEVE What?

FREYA It's always proper coffee, / no one drinks *instant*.

STEVE What? I can't hear you! I'm in the shower! I can't hear you!

 FREYA *dances. The music becomes background in Starbucks.*

 TOM *enters and offers a coffee to JASMINE.*

TOM Full-fat latte, two brown sugars, cream on top.

JASMINE Do I know you?

TOM Thought I'd do the honours. Did I get it right?

JASMINE Don't know yet what does Rohypnol taste of?

She drinks a bit.

TOM It was Marxist Criticism. We used to get our coffees at the same time. I liked the look of you, remembered your order. I'm Tom.

JASMINE Yeah.

TOM You're Jasmine. I heard you dropped out.

JASMINE I had an argument with my lecturer.

TOM What about?

JASMINE Charles Dickens. Do you smoke?

TOM I can.

JASMINE Good boy.

SARAH appears, talking to SIMON, her assistant.

SARAH There aren't any plants.

JASMINE Let's take this outside.

SARAH Department of climate change, massive office and nothing's green. It's ridiculous.

SIMON It's on the list. And you need to put something in for Casey. She's leaving.

SARAH Who's Casey?

SIMON By the wallchart? Under the window?

SARAH Why's she going? Pregnant?

SIMON Redundant.

SARAH Oh.

SIMON She's the chaff we talked about.

SARAH Right. Yes. Right.

SIMON Smaller government. That's your policy.

SARAH Not *my* policy Simon.

SIMON I'm afraid so, minister. What sort of plants do you want? You mean flowers?

SARAH Here's ten for Casey. No not flowers. Flowers are dead. We want some life round here. Get a cheese plant. They still have those?

FREYA continues to make the coffee. Watches television at the same time.

COLIN is in a supermarket and approaches a young assistant.

COLIN Excuse me.

SARAH They had them in the eighties.

COLIN I'm looking for a guava.

S. WORKER A what?

COLIN A guava.

S. WORKER What's that?

COLIN It's a vegetable.

S. WORKER Right.

COLIN Possibly a fruit.

S. WORKER Vegetables and shit are over there.

COLIN I'm sorry?

S. WORKER Vegetables and fruit and all that are over there.

COLIN I know but I've looked and I can't find it.

S. WORKER Probably don't have it then.

COLIN Probably.

S. WORKER Yeah.

COLIN Can you check?

S. WORKER Chhh.

SUPERMARKET WORKER *goes off to check. Still the music in the background. JASMINE and TOM are smoking outside.*

JASMINE He's sat there opposite me, I said I'm not being funny but if you want two thousand words by Monday you can whistle, I have to *work* weekends, different for you Gary, fucking baby boomers, get your grant, got your degree then don't pay for your kids. So he says 'Do you have financial difficulties Jasmine?' and I'm like 'Gary. We all have financial difficulties, read the fucking papers.' Then he suddenly goes red, shouts that I'm 'thick as corrugated shit' whatever that means and says I only got in here because of who my sister is, so I lost it completely, threw a bookshelf at him.

TOM A bookshelf?

JASMINE It was *Bleak House* that got him in the eye, hardback so he had to go to hospital. They said I was a menace, attacking my lecturer with a weapon, I said something about the power of the written word and that was it. Out.

TOM You don't look like a menace.

JASMINE I am, Tom.

SUPERMARKET WORKER *comes back.*

S. WORKER Is this it?

JASMINE I'm a natural fucking disaster.

COLIN How should I know? I don't know what a guava is.
You tell me.

S. WORKER Yeah. This is it.

COLIN You're sure?

S. WORKER Yes.

COLIN Positive? Because this is important. I want you to understand that if I get home and this isn't a guava I'm in big trouble. So it follows that if I get home and this isn't a guava *you're* in big trouble, yes?

He reads her badge.

...Sue. You're in big trouble if this isn't a guava Sue. So.

You're sure?

S. WORKER Candice said it was and she's good with fruit.

COLIN Right, thanks.

STEVE enters with his suitcase, just as FREYA, dancing, throws his coffee across the kitchen. STEVE jumps out the way. FREYA takes her headphones off.

FREYA Didn't mean to do that. Oops.

STEVE Oops.

STEVE *smiles and grabs a cloth instantly to mop it up.*

FREYA I can make another.

STEVE No, I have to go really, sorry...

FREYA Don't be sorry.

STEVE Sorry I'm going at all.

FREYA Don't be – we need work, money, especially now, in the current climate, the way things are, that's what you say.

STEVE And it's only three days so –

FREYA Exactly. It's only three days so –

STEVE And you'll call me if anything –

FREYA Yes I'll call you if anything but nothing will nothing does nothing happens you know how it is round here these days.

STEVE I meant the baby.

FREYA Oh right the baby, well of course / the *baby*

STEVE You've got the number of / the hospital.

FREYA There was a programme on TV they're detecting something in the ground.

STEVE / Freya?

FREYA They think something might – What? Yes I've got the number of the hospital. It's on the cupboard where you put it.

STEVE On the fridge.

FREYA On the fridge exactly. Are you sure you don't want any of this coffee? It's fair trade, kind of fruity, I like it.

STEVE I have to go – but you'll be alright?

FREYA The building might collapse while you're away.

STEVE Freya –

FREYA This is what I was trying to tell you. They said there's going to be an earthquake.

STEVE There's not.

FREYA There is.

STEVE Not here.

FREYA Right here, yes, they've detected tremors. It was on television. Do you fancy my sister?

STEVE What?

FREYA Not Sarah, obviously. Obviously not her. The other one. Jasmine.

STEVE No – Freya where does this / come from?

FREYA Why not? She's pretty.

STEVE She's nineteen.

FREYA Exactly. Thin, good-looking, bet she's good in bed. Of course you like her, you've had that thought. I used to look like that when we first met, I found some photographs, but what happened? Look at me now, fat and red like a massive blood clot or something. No wonder you don't want sex with me any more. You should give her a call I'm serious I really am.

They look at each other. He moves closer, hugs her.

STEVE I don't think you're a massive blood clot.

FREYA Or something, I'm definitely something.

STEVE I wanted sex with you last night as it happens.

FREYA I can't I can't not with this, it's like it's watching.

STEVE I love you.

He kisses her tummy.

 You too. I'll call when I get in.

FREYA I'm a bit lost at the moment, Steve, really. Don't go.

A moment.

STEVE Just three days. That's all. It's not as bad as you think.
Never is.

FREYA Oh. Okay. Good.
He kisses her again and leaves. As the door shuts, FREYA jumps and the walls shake a little. She's scared. As TOM and JASMINE talk, FREYA looks around her, then produces a packet of cigarettes and lights one.

TOM So your sister's famous?

JASMINE My older sister is. Not in a good way. She's a politician. I didn't get in here because of my sister, I got in *despite* her, they *hate* her here.

TOM What does she do?

JASMINE When my mum died, my dad was a mess, so my sister looked after us but she was awful at it, really bad, because she's got absolutely no heart. Totally cold. She's made of metal, like the Terminator or something. But worse. She's like Terminator 3.
SARAH is giving a speech for her team.
Yeah, she's Terminator 3.

SARAH Hello! Hi. We're so sorry to be seeing... Casey... go, leave. Yes. And although of course I absolutely believe our new... policy of smaller government is the right one at this difficult time, it doesn't mean it's not a... sadness... when it impacts on someone personally. Casey's been fantastic as part of the ministerial team, a real laugh, ever since I've been here I've noticed that she's so... *funny*. Anyway, Casey, we've had a whip-round and got you this.
SARAH gives a gift bag to CASEY. CASEY looks inside.

CASEY A coffee machine.

SARAH Yes.

CASEY I've been here five years.

SARAH Well it's quite a good one I –

CASEY I don't drink coffee.

SARAH You don't –

CASEY Herbal tea.

SARAH Oh.

CASEY It's always been herbal tea.

SARAH Right... well... someone hasn't done their research.

CASEY Research? Didn't anybody *know*? Jesus. You have no idea. We don't need *less government*. Everything's getting worse, and you're cutting the support. It's what the Tories would do crisis or not, but I voted Lib Dem. I voted for you. And what good did it do?

She looks around at everyone and gives the machine back.

Put it on eBay. I'm leaving the country.

SARAH steps down, speaks to her aide.

SARAH Good idea. Get the car.

SIMON You can't, you have a meeting in your office in three minutes.

SARAH My stomach's rumbling.

SIMON Here. Egg salad. Tesco Express. You can eat it on the way back.

He gives her a horrible-looking sandwich. She just stands for a moment. Exhausted. FREYA watches scenes from a documentary about the planet. Tectonic plates. Storms and hurricanes.

Are you...?

Another moment.

Should I...

She looks up and snaps out of it.

SARAH What? Egg? Perfect.

SARAH crams the sandwich into her mouth as she leaves.

There's a knock on FREYA's door, she goes to answer it.

TOM and JASMINE are going back inside.

JASMINE My sister's coming along tonight actually.

TOM To what?

JASMINE To what I do now. To my job. It's a bit political too.

You could come along if you want. You'll be shocked. First time I've done it. It's *very* political Tom. Very in-your-face kind of political. You might not be able to cope. It might be all too – *political* for you. I've got a costume. So what do you think? Want to risk it?

TOM *smiles.*

TOM Yeah.

FREYA opens the door. It's PETER, a teenage boy with glasses in a grey hoodie.

PETER Alright miss. You busy?

FREYA Peter. / What are you –

PETER Is that whisky? You shouldn't be drinking if you're pregnant, we saw it on a video in Biology, Mr Greg showed it us yeah and it said if you drink your baby ends up disabled or something maybe it dies in you and they have to pull it out with tweezers. Can I come in? I'm not doing very good. I want your advice.

FREYA How did you know where I live?

PETER Went on the internet, put your name in, it's not difficult. Big bump you've got now. I need to talk. Can I come in?

FREYA I might get into trouble.

PETER Nah you can't be a paedophile cos you're a woman and the hood's not cos I want to cut you it's cos it's raining, come on

miss it's fucking biblical out here pardon my mouth used to talk didn't we? I liked it when we talked but you only come into school two days a week and not even that now. You're not busy clearly, you're watching TV. Is your husband in?

FREYA He's gone away.

PETER His car's outside.

FREYA He got a taxi to the airport.

PETER Yeah not supposed to fly any more though are you? How long's he gone for then?

FREYA Just a couple of days.

PETER Bet you could do with the company then.

FREYA No.

PETER Bet you could though.

FREYA Peter, you should go back to school.

PETER No one visits you do they?

FREYA ...

PETER That's cos pregnant women are a bit of a pain. Sweaty and fat, stuck in the house, moaning and moaning, I don't think that miss, but most people do that's why they don't visit. But I'm here.

I got you a flower.

He holds out a flower. She looks at him.

FREYA Thank you.

She takes the flower. He enters.

SARAH is having a meeting with CARTER in her office. She offers him a biscuit.

CARTER Thank you. It's wonderful to meet you at last. Been a year. Thought I'd done something wrong.

SARAH I've been very busy.

CARTER Well, better late than never. How are we doing?

SARAH In two days' time, after concluding my review, I recommend to the PM.

CARTER So I hear.

SARAH And I thought you might want a heads-up, to give you time to formulate a public response.

CARTER A heads-up. Lovely. A response to what?

SARAH We're nice people, Mr Carter.

CARTER I'm sure you are. Everyone's *nice* these days aren't they? Even me. I bought my son Adam a bike, for his birthday. Very expensive. He loved it. And what have you nice people got to offer us?

SARAH I thought you might want to come on board with the decision now, rather than wasting time and effort fighting it.

CARTER The decision.

SARAH Yes.

Another biscuit?

He looks at her.

CARTER Adam's learning quickly, he's six, he looked at his bike, and he said 'what's the bad news Dad?' He said you only buy me presents like this when there's bad news. He was right. His mother had run over the cat. This coalition government, whatever it is, you're supposed to be business friendly.

SARAH We're very business / friendly, yes.

CARTER So what do you mean, what are we talking?

SARAH The Heathrow decision played very well for us, the public didn't want that third runway, they were pleased we got in, and stopped it, so now I'll be recommending a complete halt to expansion.

CARTER Where?

SARAH Everywhere.
 CARTER is surprised.

CARTER Look, Heathrow? Fine, I understand your position, you had to pull back, but it was assumed at the time, it was very strongly hoped, in fact, that in return, there would be balance.

SARAH There isn't the need.

CARTER We let Heathrow go, but we get Birmingham, Edinburgh, London City instead – Belfast – that was understood.

SARAH It can't be justified environmentally.

CARTER A few miles of concrete here and there, a couple of sheds, it's not the end of the world. Have you talked to your colleagues, because I can't see this being very popular.

SARAH A definitive halt to expansion will make a huge impact.

CARTER Only as a symbol.

SARAH A symbol exactly. We have to be seen to be doing all we can to lower carbon emissions. We want to set an example.
 CARTER looks at her.

CARTER This is your big idea.

SARAH If you like.

CARTER You're a symbol yourself really aren't you Sarah? Can I call you Sarah? Bet you never thought you'd be in power at all, but hung parliament, green credentials and a famous father –

SARAH My position in this government has nothing to do with my father.

CARTER Everyone thinks it does.

SARAH Then everyone is wrong.

CARTER Touched a nerve.

SARAH Not at all.

CARTER You're upset.

SARAH Do I look upset?

CARTER The way you rub your fingers together like that yes.
She's surprised for a second, but look back at him.

SARAH We're not short of airports. In two days I have a meeting and I will put the case very firmly. The Prime Minister will make a decision, and that will be it. We'll announce next week.

CARTER You look tired.

SARAH I work hard.

CARTER I don't think it's work.
CARTER takes a biscuit.
Before tomorrow, I'll change your mind.

SARAH Really?
He passes the biscuits across.

CARTER Yes.
Biscuit?
FREYA and PETER.

PETER I like your posters, you into Hitchcock?

FREYA They're my husband's.

PETER And *Grand Theft Auto*. You play that a lot do you?

FREYA That's his too.

PETER I find it a bit violent myself. I don't think driving round killing people should be in computer games. There's one where you can rape a girl. That's a bit weird they allow that considering everything that's gone on. Coldplay album? Everyone's got a Coldplay album these days, saw them on TV at Glastonbury they were rather good. What's yours then?

FREYA The books. I –

PETER What are you reading at the moment?

FREYA Late Victorian poetry. Peter –

PETER That sounds really incredibly boring. Can I sit down? / Are you going to give me a whisky? What's this?

FREYA Of course you can sit down. I don't know about a whisky –

PETER Jees, you've been smoking as well, your baby's gonna be a fucking 'tato with what you're doing.

FREYA Peter, what do / you want?!

PETER What's the programme?

FREYA They say there's going to be an earthquake.

PETER Here?

FREYA My husband laughed as well but it's what they –

PETER No they're right, it's true. There's going to be a massive tremor, the day after tomorrow, a huge seismic event, right in the capital. Things'll seem very different after that.

She looks at him. Shocked – how could he know?

 My problem is I don't have any friends. Atomisation. It's very common in society today. Increasingly people use internet dating to make a connection and find companionship but I'm only fourteen so I prefer porn. I am allowed a whisky actually. It is legal. In the home. If you're fourteen. So.

FREYA I'm not going to give you whisky.

PETER I think you should though. Then we can talk properly.

She considers.

FREYA Why not?

 FREYA goes to get PETER a drink. PETER sits down in the chair and relaxes as a BUSINESSMAN on a plane, next to

STEVE, *does the same*.

BUSINESSMAN Remember when you could smoke?

STEVE What?

BUSINESSMAN Smoke. On planes.

STEVE I see the ashtrays in the toilets. But I don't ever remember...

BUSINESSMAN Fifteen years ago, you could go to the smoking section and smoke, didn't do any harm, no more planes went down, less than now, it was long before, you know... *terrorism* – maybe it's linked. Frustrated Arabs. All they want is a fag. Cos they can't drink can they? Could be linked. Joking of course. You going to Scotland on business is it?

STEVE No.

BUSINESSMAN Holiday then?

STEVE It's personal.

BUSINESSMAN Oh right, well. Keep your own.

Fair enough.

Up to you.

STEVE I told my wife it's business.

BUSINESSMAN Oh.

STEVE But it isn't.

BUSINESSMAN Ah.

Yes.

Well.

I know all about that.

STEVE What?

BUSINESSMAN That.

STEVE No.

BUSINESSMAN Sometimes I'm in LA, and I always let her know in advance, I say I won't, say it's not good for me, but I drop a cheeky email, turn up and we have the time of our lives. Keeps my marriage healthy. Keeps me trim she does. Carly.

STEVE Carly?

BUSINESSMAN Twenty-seven. Blonde. Tits. You know. Tits. Twenty-seven. LA. Sun. Tits. Blonde. Jesus. Says it all.

Why she goes for me I don't know, well I do, flash the money a bit, but life's short isn't it so you do what you have to, and my wife knows, sure she's done the same, my view is, if it keeps you trotting on, keeps you happy and the kids don't know then what's the harm? No you go for it mate. Full speed.

STEVE It's not...

BUSINESSMAN Sorry?

STEVE It's not an affair.

BUSINESSMAN Oh. But you let me go on about...

STEVE I didn't feel I could stop you.

BUSINESSMAN Always do this. Always end up talking to strangers on planes. Must be nervous I suppose.

STEVE You fly a lot?

BUSINESSMAN It's bad for you.

STEVE Bad for you?

BUSINESSMAN Of course, the more you fly, the greater chance you'll be in a crash. It's not natural.

If God had meant us to fly, he'd have his own airline.

Rumbling. Turbulence or possibly the sound of thunder. The lights flash.

'There She Goes, My Beautiful World' by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds plays.

JASMINE comes on dressed in branches and leaves.
She holds a sign which says ‘The wilful destruction of the rainforest’ .
She dances.
She slowly peels off leaves and branches.
Eventually she is left with leaves in the vital places, à la Adam and Eve.
She picks up a sign:
‘Originally, there were six million square miles of tropical rainforest’
Another sign:
‘Only a third is left’
She raises her eyebrows.
There are cheers from the crowd.
Flirty eyes.
She picks up another sign.
It says: ‘Don’t leave the world naked’
As she goes, leaves fall from the ceiling.
FREYA brings PETER his whisky then lights a cigarette.

PETER Hmm. I’m enjoying this. This is good, really good whisky.
Did you buy it?

FREYA Peter, if there’s going to be an earthquake why aren’t people scared?

PETER I was in an earthquake once in Tokyo. Me and my parents were doing karaoke in this room –

FREYA Can you answer / my question please.

PETER – and the floor started moving and the walls tilted, shook a bit but not like you imagine, everything just went... drunk.

Do you ever feel like that miss, stuck in this flat like you are, that the walls are moving and everything's becoming dangerous?

FREYA All the time.

FREYA *drinks the whisky.*

But what can I do?

TOM *and JASMINE are in a bar.*

TOM Never seen a stripper before.

JASMINE It wasn't stripping.

TOM This is a strip club.

JASMINE It's burlesque.

TOM There's a man waving.

COLIN *appears and waves. He's still carrying a carrier bag with the shopping.*

JASMINE It's my sister's husband.

TOM You invited your sister's husband?

JASMINE I invited my sister. She said she'd come so I got *political*, thought she'd like it, but she texted at the last minute, said Colin was coming instead. Colin's been around since I was a kid, he was a banker, lost his job, now he's got time on his hands. Warning: He can be a bit –

COLIN Brought my shopping!

JASMINE I can see that.

COLIN Bit weird. Well done!

JASMINE You liked it?

COLIN You can really dance.

JASMINE Yeah.

COLIN Haven't seen you perform since school.

TOM And hasn't she grown?

COLIN Well... I... I suppose so.

JASMINE This is Tom.

COLIN Oh right. Hello. Are you her latest...

TOM Latest?

JASMINE Thanks Colin.

TOM Her *latest*?

COLIN Squeeze.

JASMINE Oh god.

TOM We've only just met.

COLIN Well the night's young.

JASMINE For fuck's sake.

An awkward pause.

COLIN I thought you made a very good point actually Jasmine.

TOM There was a *point*?

JASMINE The signs?

TOM I wasn't really looking at the signs.

COLIN The destruction of the rainforest.

TOM So that's why you were dressed as a bush.

JASMINE A tree.

TOM Certainly looked like a bush from where I was sitting.

Awkward.

COLIN Do you want a drink either of you?

JASMINE No thanks Colin.

TOM Nah.

COLIN Right.

Well. Great to... see you. Jasmine.

I should probably be going... got some milk needs the fridge, asap, don't want it to...

Smell, but really...

Well done.

Good work!

JASMINE Good to see you.

COLIN Right. Bye.

Pause. He goes.

JASMINE God.

TOM Actually I did read the signs.

JASMINE Really.

TOM Yeah, I'm quite into the environment. My family from before, they're Eritrean? and they –

JASMINE Er sorry to interrupt you but I've had enough of the environment, hear about it all the fucking time, I only did it for my sister and she didn't even turn up. I'll do a Nazi one next week probably. They love Nazis. Have you got any pills? You look like the sort of person that carries drugs around in their pocket.

TOM A sort of black person you mean?

JASMINE A sort of careless person I mean, who leaves their coat lying around.

She holds them up.

Found them earlier.

She opens the bag.

FREYA and PETER.

FREYA Shall I be mother?

PETER I'm spinning.

FREYA I know what you mean. I don't see anyone for days, the walls start shaking, so I think about going out but it's all shouting and dirt, so I stay in, but then... I've started singing, ever since I got back. When I sing I forget she's there.

PETER Got back from where? Can I have a cigarette?

FREYA I don't know what to do.

PETER I didn't see anyone for three days once and got really paranoid my head was too big for my body, but it's not, is it? Is it? Is it? Cos earlier Gary Franks said I looked weird, chased me out of school said I was special needs.

FREYA You are special needs.

PETER Not in a bad way, not like those deaf kids you spend your time with.

FREYA Don't say that.

PETER I can do an impression of a deaf person.

FREYA No.

PETER I can, look, it's funny.

FREYA Don't.

PETER moves closer to FREYA – threatening.

PETER If you don't give me a cigarette I'll do an impression of a deaf person.

FREYA No!

Don't

Here.

She throws him the cigarettes, PETER grabs them and stops. A throbbing beat has begun. FREYA's in pain.

PETER I know cigarettes are supposed to be bad for you but apparently if you give up within five years you're pretty much back to normal and I'm very young so I think I'll be fine miss.

FREYA In my head.

PETER Do you think that's right?

Miss?

Do you think I'm right about that? Miss?

Miss?!

The sound of a plane in the distance.

A computer screen is projected.

Someone is writing.

WRITING 'I feel that I would be right for the position of senior accounts manager as I am both strong...

He deletes.

strong both as a team player and a leader.

Lights up on COLIN, who is typing.

...I have demonstrated this on many occasions, leading my team through many years of excellent service over the last ten years. Ten. Years...'

The cursor goes to Google.

It types. Student Girls Party Pictures.

As images appear the stage becomes full of students dancing in mini-skirts, boys with their tops off, grinding up against each other. Dance music gets slowly louder. In the middle are JASMINE and TOM. COLIN stands up, watching, wanting to be involved.

FREYA is now faced away from PETER, leaning against a wall, a throbbing beat in her head.

PETER *is trying to light the cigarette.*

PETER As you know, I don't really like being outside, around lots of other people, but do you remember what you said miss? I'd stabbed Luke Reynolds with a compass, and got detention, and you said I couldn't just sit around feeling sorry for myself, I had to get off my arse and fucking do something. Find the good things.

FREYA I don't think I used those words.

PETER You did use those words. You definitely said fucking do something. I found the honesty quite bracing.

You're one of the only people in my life who tells me the truth.

FREYA So you think I should get up and –

PETER I don't know, but what with the shaking

FREYA I was imagining it, the walls can't –

PETER I didn't mean the walls.

FREYA Oh.

PETER Your hands miss. Look.

Her hand is shaking.

You should pack a bag and get out and see what's going on. Find the good things. Before it's too late.

They look at each other. He lights the cigarette, smiles and relaxes.

FREYA *leaves. Determined.*

COLIN *watches them dancing. Enjoys it. He then changes the track on iTunes to Coldplay – 'Viva La Vida'. The students cheer – enjoying the cheese.*

SARAH *enters.*

SARAH What's this?

COLIN Coldplay

SARAH You bought a Coldplay album?

COLIN In Tesco on the way home yeah.

SARAH That's the sort of thing boring middle-aged women do.

COLIN Right.

SARAH You don't look like a boring middle-aged woman.

COLIN You do.

SARAH's tired of the bickering.

SARAH Found anything yet?

SARAH goes into the kitchen where the shopping is laid out.

COLIN, very quietly, sings at the computer.

COLIN shouts through to the kitchen.

COLIN You see this is the problem, that's always the first thing you ask, you get in and you don't kiss me, touch me, even look at me –

SARAH What's this?

SARAH is standing in the doorway holding a fruit.

COLIN A guava.

SARAH No.

COLIN Right.

SARAH Get the ingredients. That's all I asked. It's not a guava Colin, it's a plum. Find a job. That's the problem. Not me. Find a fucking job. I'll make a sandwich.

SARAH goes. COLIN keeps on singing to himself, restrained and shy, watching the students dance.

STEVE appears, trying to hide from the wind, and starts knocking on a door. TOM dances with

JASMINE, they kiss passionately. COLIN watches. SARAH makes a sandwich. PETER goes to the CDs and looks at them.

SARAH goes to bed. The door is opened by MRS ANDREWS.

MRS ANDREWS Yes?

STEVE I'm here to see Mr Crannock.

MRS ANDREWS Mr Crannock is in bed.

STEVE I'm Steve Sullivan.
His daughter's husband?

MRS ANDREWS sighs.

MRS ANDREWS Is he expecting you?

STEVE No.

MRS ANDREWS ...

STEVE Please. It's very cold.

She lets him in. JASMINE and TOM dance. PETER chooses a CD and puts it on – the same Coldplay song. Listens. Mouths along. He likes it.

At the next chorus PETER sings loudly like a choirboy. COLIN still very quietly.

FREYA appears with a bag, hat and coat, ready to go out.

FREYA You can put the heating on if you like. The switch is in the hall,

PETER What are you doing?

FREYA There's food in the fridge.

PETER I didn't mean you should go now. It's raining cats and dogs out there, and you're pregnant, you probably shouldn't even stand up for too long, it might fall out or something.

FREYA You can stay here. You won't steal anything will you?

PETER Can I watch your DVDs?

FREYA Yes.

PETER Even the eighteens?

FREYA If you want.

PETER Can I drink your whisky and vodka?

FREYA Whatever you like. You've got the place to yourself for a couple of days. Okay?

PETER Okay.

FREYA Right. Okay...

PETER Are you going to be alright miss?

FREYA She's kicking. Stop it!

The good things. I can't stay here.

FREYA opens the door and leaves.

PETER stands up and sings.

The students join in, singing the backing vocals.

PETER sings, the students dance, and COLIN sits by his computer motionless and sad.

Everyone sings as FREYA walks off into the night. Lights fade.

Music in the dark. Music fades. End of Act One.

ACT TWO

Prologue

1973.

Technicolour.

ROBERT *and two businessmen*, DANIEL *and* ROY. ROY *is smoking*.

ROY Good to see you. Have a seat.

ROBERT Thanks.

ROY How's the baby?

ROBERT Oh, you –?

ROY Daniel mentioned there was a baby. A baby girl.

ROBERT Right, yes.

DANIEL Wonderful.

ROY Wonderful. And your wife?

ROBERT Very happy obviously, well we both are.

ROY Very happy. You both are.

DANIEL Perfect.

ROY Perfect. So. Robert. You're wondering why you're here? When does the main UK airline call in a Cambridge boffin like you? Well, our bods predict that in thirty years' time there'll be thousands of planes in the sky, flying people all over the place, which makes us happy of course, because there's a lot of money to be made.

ROBERT Yes.

ROY But there are increasing concerns.

DANIEL Questions.

ROY Sorry?

DANIEL Questions, I think Roy.

ROY Questions, exactly, about what the effect will be of all this air travel? With the emissions. Into the atmosphere.

ROBERT Right.

ROY People are starting to get worried.

DANIEL Curious.

ROY People are starting to become *curious* about what burning all that fuel might do. To the world.

DANIEL The environment.

ROY The *environment*. So we thought we'd get an expert in who could do a study.

Look into your crystal ball and tell us what's going to happen. So what do you think? Is it possible?

ROBERT Well. We'd... we'd need to model the world on a scale no one's done before. And... well... I don't want to be rude, but obviously you're hoping for a negative answer here aren't you?

DANIEL No no.

ROY A what?

DANIEL He means do we want him to get us the result which says these fumes are doing no harm at all? Should he fix it?

ROY Ah. No. Robert, you do your science and you tell us what you find.

We won't interfere at all.

ROBERT No interference.

DANIEL None.

ROBERT Right.

ROY And this is only the first phase. If this project seems promising, we're authorised to commission further work, over the next ten years.

ROBERT Really?

ROY Absolutely. Because your results might not just be useful for us, but many similar organisations. The motor industry, oil companies. They would all be very interested in promising results.

ROBERT What do you mean promising?

ROY Results that seem to be useful.

DANIEL Meaningful.

ROY Right. *Meaningful*. I need a coffee.

ROBERT Well I'm sure it's possible to achieve a certain clarity, but this is a very new subject, there's no real way of knowing how quantifiable in real terms the...

ROY This would be the fee.

ROBERT Right.
He reads it.
That's... Oh. Yes. That's good. I'm sure we could make a start with that.

ROY No. Robert.
That's not the budget.
The project will have a separate budget.
That's your fee.
That's for you. To keep.

DANIEL And remember there's potential for a good deal more of this to come. I would imagine someone like you, in your position, academic, young family. This could make a real difference.

ROBERT Yes.

ROY Why don't you take it away and have a good old think?

All the Mothers

The present.

Hampstead Heath – early morning. Birdsong.

FREYA is sat by the pond.

A number of male swimmers are in the ponds, swimming. They have similar swimming hats and swimming costumes. One by one they come and stand in the fresh morning air. Birds fly past, a clear blue sky.

FREYA watches them for a while.

One of the swimmers starts to play ukulele.

FREYA starts singing along to 'Deep Water' by Portishead. The first swimmer is surprised, but interested. Three other swimmers stand in a line and act as backing singers.

FREYA I'm drifting in deep waters
 Alone with my self-doubting again
 I try not to struggle this time
 For I will weather the storm

SARAH gets to her desk, piled with papers. It's first thing, but she's exhausted – she sits down and makes a start.

JASMINE sits on the end of the bed, waits, upset.

I gotta remember
(Gotta remember)
Don't fight it
(Don't fight it)
Even if I
(Even if I
Don't like it

(Don't like it)
Somehow turn me around
(Somehow turn me around)

No matter how far I drift
Deep waters
(Deep waters)
Won't scare me tonight

SARAH picks up the phone. FREYA's phone rings. The swimmers look annoyed with FREYA.

TOM appears, and JASMINE goes off with him. The swimmers go off.

She answers.

SARAH I missed your call.

FREYA I thought we could meet up?

SARAH I can hear birds.

FREYA I'm on the heath.

SARAH Hampstead Heath?

FREYA Yeah, by the ponds. I packed a bag, left early.

SARAH You don't live anywhere near Hampstead Heath.

FREYA Very early. Apparently there's a view where you can see the whole city.

SARAH Parliament Hill.

FREYA I think I'm looking for that. So are we going to meet then?

SARAH I could do Thursday?

FREYA I meant today really.

SARAH I'm busy Freya.

FREYA You're always busy Freya, but Steve's not here and I couldn't get hold of Jasmine, / so I thought we could –

SARAH Don't ask Jasmine, you called Jasmine?

FREYA You have got time, I know you have.

A beautiful perfect woman dressed in black with black sunglasses, pushing a pram, goes past.

SARAH Get here, to the department, for one o'clock. We'll have twenty minutes. Well, ten. Come to the desk and tell them who you are.

FREYA Thanks.

SARAH Right.

SARAH hangs up. The MOTHER accidentally drops a leaflet from the pram. FREYA picks it up and reads it.

FREYA A picnic, on Parliament Hill.

Perfect.

Excuse me.

FREYA follows the woman, off through the Heath.

ROBERT's House.

STEVE is asleep on the sofa. MRS ANDREWS clatters in, open the curtains.

MRS ANDREWS Are you not awake yet?

STEVE wakes up.

How did you sleep?

STEVE How do you think?

STEVE stands up in just his boxer shorts, woozy.

The sofa's too short, so I tried the floor, but there was a draught.

MRS ANDREWS Mr Sullivan...

STEVE What?

MRS ANDREWS You're not at your best.

STEVE Oh.

He puts his jeans on. Then a T-shirt.

Isn't there a spare room?

MRS ANDREWS There's my room.

STEVE I'm sorry?

MRS ANDREWS If you'd called ahead, we could've made arrangements.

STEVE What do you mean?

MRS ANDREWS When your wife visited, I stayed at my sister's.

STEVE Oh – you... Freya called ahead?

MRS ANDREWS Do you two not talk about these things? Now, Mr Crannock has got up and gone out. He starts very early, and won't be disturbed. You've never met I understand?

STEVE No.

MRS ANDREWS No, well if he trusts you you'll get a drink, if he likes you, he'll talk all night. He'll be back to the house later this afternoon, as will I.

STEVE What am I supposed to do until then? You've got no television, I didn't bring my computer, there's no reception on my phone.

MRS ANDREWS You'll have to occupy yourself I suppose.

STEVE With what?

MRS ANDREWS *looks at him.*

MRS ANDREWS There's a radio.

MRS ANDREWS *goes.*

FREYA *sees an OLD WOMAN laying flowers at a war memorial. The OLD WOMAN wears a coat and headscarf.*

FREYA Excuse me.

OLD WOMAN Alright dear?

FREYA I like your flowers.

OLD WOMAN Thank you dear.

The OLD WOMAN smiles. They both look at the memorial.

Was it... your husband?

OLD WOMAN Dunkirk.

FREYA And you still miss him?

OLD WOMAN I miss what went with him. How it was, when we were together.

FREYA Did you have children?

OLD WOMAN It was a different country then. England was made of wood and metal. Not plastic, like this. You know what I'm saying?

FREYA No I –

OLD WOMAN It had teacakes, cricket whites, cut grass. Yes? Blitz spirit, rooms full of smoke.

FREYA Okay. Yeah I suppose it / must've been

OLD WOMAN Short trousers, dinner jackets, tea dances.

FREYA I always wanted to go to a –

OLD WOMAN Devonshire cream, Coventry steel, the home guard, the muffin man, the post man, larders in the kitchen, fires in the living room, the damp smell of gravel in outdoor toilets. You don't know what I'm talking about.

FREYA No.

OLD WOMAN That was our England. All gone now of course. Things move so fast. The cars, the internet. Yes we had children, but I never see them. Always got something better to do.

So instead, I come to the heath.

And wait.

FREYA What for?

OLD WOMAN The silver lining. Soon it'll all be over.

They look at the memorial.

SIMON *enters SARAH's office.*

SIMON Your sister's at the front desk.

SARAH Now?

SIMON Now.

SARAH I said one o'clock.

SIMON *hands SARAH an envelope.*

What's this?

SIMON Not sure. It just arrived. What about your sister?

SARAH Send her up, and get me a Starbucks.

SIMON Skinny?

SARAH No. Fat. Really fucking... fat.

SIMON *goes. FREYA is with the OLD WOMAN.*

FREYA I'm looking I'm really looking for something good,
happening now, but you're saying things are only getting
worse.

OLD WOMAN Religious intolerance, economic collapse, tsunamis,
riots... it's the perfect conditions.

FREYA I don't understand.

OLD WOMAN Is it a boy?

FREYA A girl.

OLD WOMAN A little girl. Well. I hope she can fight.

*A young man in a Second World War uniform comes on. He
takes the OLD WOMAN's arm and kisses her.*

FREYA What?

OLD WOMAN There's a gathering storm.

He takes off her headscarf and she stands upright – a young couple from the 1940s.

FREYA How do you know?

OLD WOMAN Old people can predict the weather...

The man opens an umbrella and it starts to rain.

You see?

FREYA She can fight. I've felt her kicking.

OLD WOMAN Haven't you got anyone to take you home?

FREYA No. He's...

Gone.

The OLD WOMAN goes with her husband, just as a MOTHER comes past with her pram. FREYA goes off after her.

JASMINE enters SARAH's office with TOM.

JASMINE I've got a problem.

SARAH Where's Freya?

JASMINE Where she normally is, probably – at home, eating crisps.

SARAH Who's this?

JASMINE He's the problem.

SARAH Does he have a name?

JASMINE Tom.

SARAH takes them in for a second.

SARAH Okay. I'm going to look over my letters but I am listening.

JASMINE Last night, I was at a party.

SARAH Thought you were dancing last night.

JASMINE After that. It was a porn star party, we all dressed as porn stars you know

SARAH Not really.

JASMINE And I went back with Tom. We fucked and stuff, and he was taking pictures on his phone I thought for fun yeah?

SARAH Yep.

JASMINE And then today this morning when I'm a bit morning-ey, just woken up, he tells me that his family in Africa are being affected by climate change and that you aren't doing anything so his family are going to die. Apparently you're making this big statement about 'airport expansion'.

SARAH Next week, that's right.

JASMINE So he says why don't we go and see your sister and get a commitment.

SARAH And you said.

JASMINE There's no way I could change her mind she doesn't listen to a word I say.

SARAH Absolutely right.

JASMINE But then he said he's only gone with me, he's only done any of it, so that he could blackmail you. He's part of some group or whatever. He says if he doesn't get an assurance, he'll send the pictures to the paper.

SARAH What were they of?

JASMINE The pictures? Drinking, puking. Us in his room fucking.

SARAH Nothing illegal?

JASMINE Nothing in the pictures.

SARAH Does he speak?

TOM This is happening, right now, to people like me, to my family. And if you don't believe me...

He gets papers out of his bag.

Letters, photographs, measurements. Rainfall, crop growth, all from my family in Eritrea. Now, I realise you probably

don't even know where Eritrea is but –

SARAH Borders in the west, in the south, and in the south-east...

TOM Yeah okay, yeah, exactly, and they're struggling to –

SARAH The population's an estimated five million? The capital is – I assume you're going to tell me about the current and tangible effects of climate change on the agriculture, on the villages, your family.

TOM You're aware of all that.

SARAH That's sort of my job.

TOM Then it's worse. You know what's going on and you still allow runways and flight paths. You don't listen, we've raised petitions, spoken to our MPs, all you say is you 'appreciate our view', you 'encourage the debate' – but nothing happens.

SARAH You don't know what we're going to announce.

TOM I can guess.

SARAH You can guess absolutely you can have a wild stab in the dark but you don't *know*.

I want you to understand a couple of things Tom. Firstly my sister's a student. She has sex. So what? You think the public are going to be interested? *I'm* not interested.

Secondly, in this country you elect your government, and then we consult and make decisions based on what is right for the people. We take into account different factors – environmental, economic, social. It's complicated because we have to consider everything. Transport means investment. Investment means greater employment. Greater employment means less poverty, which presumably you're in favour of? That's why you have people like me, to make a *judgement*. So what are you doing, Tom? Blackmail? Of a democratically elected member of parliament?

TOM *slams his papers on her desk.*

TOM It's a protest.

SARAH Good. There. You've protested. It's over. Now delete the photos, get out of my office, stop wasting my time.

TOM Are you going to read all this?

SARAH I'm certainly going to file it.

TOM You can't dismiss me.

SARAH This isn't the student union Tom. We're the fucking government. Go away.

 TOM *turns to go. JASMINE turns as well.*

 Not you.

 TOM *stares at SARAH for a moment. Then goes.*

JASMINE I only came here for your sake.

SARAH You didn't want your arse in the *Daily Mail*.

JASMINE Wouldn't be the first time.

SARAH What?

JASMINE When I run out of toilet paper the *Daily Mail's* just what I need.

SARAH You have absolutely no idea how hard I'm working, do you? How many meetings I have, the paperwork –

JASMINE Yeah, Colin said you're always here.

SARAH It's public office Jasmine. It's the most important thing in my life, I can't –

JASMINE He'll leave you.

SARAH What?

JASMINE Colin. Surprised he hasn't already. SARAH

 JASMINE

SARAH You have no idea.

JASMINE I know what men want. And I bet you're not giving it to him. Fucking ice woman, frosty the snowbitch think you're all big and clever power tights and shoulder pads, fucking Thatcher look at you. I'd have been better off with Dad probably.

SARAH Be careful Jasmine.

JASMINE He can't have been worse than you.

SARAH You've never met him.

JASMINE You've never let me.

SARAH Let you? You're nineteen. He's a shit Jasmine, if you don't believe me, yes please give him a call instead. Or you could talk to some friends about all your problems – you never do that either do you? For some reason you never have friends to turn to. You ever wonder why you're always being fucked over like this?

JASMINE I'm not being –

SARAH Again and again I think you are, clearly you are, you ever thought why?

JASMINE You're jealous.

SARAH Jasmine, when you want to know, just ask. I've got a whole thing ready to go, I know exactly what your problem is.

JASMINE ...

SARAH You want to hear it?

JASMINE *is upset. SIMON enters, interrupting.*

SIMON One fat coffee.

JASMINE *goes. SIMON gives the coffee to SARAH, as SARAH makes a phone call.*

SARAH Call John Carter. Tell him I got the letter, and I want to meet, this afternoon.

SIMON You don't have time.

SARAH I'll make time.

SIMON *goes.* FREYA *is on Parliament Hill looking for mothers. She answers the call.*

FREYA Do you know where Parliament Hill is?

SARAH I'm sorry?

FREYA There's this big event, this afternoon. Why don't you come here?

SARAH Freya –

FREYA A picnic. There's stalls, and a band. The sun's out. I'm going to buy some sandwiches. Ice cream.

SARAH Can you listen. I've had to move things around, I can't meet you any more.

FREYA You said you'd make time.

SARAH I know but things change and you're alright aren't you? Your... picnic.

A YOUNG MAN, *dirty and sweaty, runs up to FREYA grabs her arm.*

YOUNG MAN Please! Please. Please. Please.

SARAH Everything's just gone a bit mad here.

YOUNG MAN My kid. My kid's in trouble.

FREYA Yeah, everything's gone a bit mad here too.

SARAH Got to go.

She hangs up.

YOUNG MAN He's in hospital, I've just found out, I need the bus fare to get down the road, I don't have any... change... I'm sorry, I'm really in a hurry. Shit. Shit.

FREYA How old is he?

YOUNG MAN What?

FREYA Your kid.

YOUNG MAN Seven. He fell over at school I think, I –

FREYA And you dropped everything and ran.

YOUNG MAN Yeah –

She reaches in her pocket – pulls out a fiver.

FREYA It's all I've got. I was going to get lunch.

Here.

She gives it to him.

YOUNG MAN Bless you love. Bless you.

The YOUNG

MAN runs off, ecstatic.

FREYA Good luck!

The sky gets darker. FREYA feels a sharp kick.

Ow!

Clutches her stomach.

JASMINE is in the street, unhappy, in the rain. TOM is following her.

JASMINE It was basically rape.

TOM What?

JASMINE What you did. Bit like rape or something.

TOM No it wasn't, you had a good time. I didn't plan it like –

JASMINE So you took the pictures because –

TOM You took the pictures. You suggested it. I was just hoping to persuade you to talk to your sister, but then when you wouldn't and I had the pictures on my phone –

JASMINE No / no no

TOM I realised I could do something.

JASMINE Have you ever even been there?

TOM What?

JASMINE To... You know.

TOM Eritrea.

JASMINE Yeah. You ever actually been there?

TOM I want to but I'd have to fly so –

JASMINE Right so, your family? Shut up. Never met them. Are you sorry? What you did to me?

TOM I tried three times to talk to you about it instead, but you just shouted me down, get another drink, walk away. So no I'm not sorry, you didn't leave me a choice.

She pushes him away and storms off, leaving him in the street.

MRS ANDREWS *is sorting through tablecloths. STEVE talks to her. The clock strikes four o'clock.*

STEVE How much longer is he going to be?

MRS ANDREWS He'll be home soon.

STEVE I could help if you like? With that?

MRS ANDREWS Go and stand over there.

STEVE does as he's told.

STEVE You were here when my wife visited.

MRS ANDREWS In the day, yes.

STEVE What was she like?

MRS ANDREWS I don't know. She was polite, she was like a young lady. I hope you know better than me.

Beat.

STEVE They talked.

MRS ANDREWS All night I believe.

STEVE What about?

MRS ANDREWS You think I was in there listening? I stayed at my sister's.

Pause.

STEVE You know he hasn't seen his children in years.

MRS ANDREWS Aye.

STEVE You know why?

MRS ANDREWS I stay out of his business. You'd best talk to him. If you're sensible, and you might be, you might not be, I don't know, but if you are, you'll not cross him.

STEVE Why not?

MRS ANDREWS *takes a towel and begins unfolding it.*

MRS ANDREWS Because, Mr Sullivan, while I'll admit you don't look stupid, whilst I'll concede you seem to have some kind of brain, you're no genius.

STEVE And he is?

MRS ANDREWS Yes.

STEVE A genius?

MRS ANDREWS Aye.

STEVE What does that even mean?

The door bursts open and ROBERT enters. A seventy-year-old man, in a raincoat, and holding a small wind turbine.

ROBERT A person of extraordinary intellect and talent.

A person who has great influence over another. Take this.

He gives the turbine to STEVE.

A wise man. A shaman. A prophet.

MRS ANDREWS *shuts the door and gives him the towel on cue.*

MRS ANDREWS Mr Crannock.

STEVE I'm sorry to just –

ROBERT Shh. I've had the data, had that for a while, but now you're here in person, now I'm looking at you... you don't work too hard, that's clear, a sense of humour but nothing with edge. You used to be a sportsman. Cricket?

STEVE Football.

ROBERT Football. Ha! But that's been dropped. Your shirt's a bit tight round the sides, you've put on weight recently. You like things to be simple. Fish fingers and chips.

Don't like posh food. You're that sort of man. Yes? Chicken nuggets and pizza. Ketchup. Beans.

Children's food. You haven't cut your fingernails properly, tells me you're self-employed. Yes? Good.

So? Me?

Come on *Steve*. Who am I? Am I what you expected?

STEVE You're lonely. But I knew that already.

ROBERT Oooh. Killer. But no actually, not so lonely. Mrs Andrews keeps me company. She's a blessing. Problem is. She loves me.

MRS ANDREWS

ROBERT Those *eyes*. I tell her, Mrs Andrews, it's not you, it's your *age*. It's prohibitive. I know why you're here.

STEVE Good.

ROBERT And I'm not interested, could've told you over the phone. Now this...

ROBERT *pours himself a drink.*

Is a very fine single malt. Should I be drinking at my age, at this time in the afternoon, you're thinking? You're not a whisky drinker are you Steve?

STEVE Not really.

ROBERT Not really? You are or you're not. Where did you sleep?

STEVE On the sofa.

ROBERT We don't have a spare bed do we?

MRS ANDREWS No.

ROBERT Flirting! Look at her. There isn't a bed, there you have it, straight from the horse's mouth – no offence Mrs A – and you didn't call ahead, so it looks like you're on the sofa again tonight.

STEVE If we can just talk now I can get going, I don't –

ROBERT I work hard, you can see this I work all day I've got things to do. I'm very busy.

STEVE I've come all the way here –

ROBERT So make the most of it there's hotels – scenery. A loch nearby, a castle.

STEVE I'm here because of Freya.

ROBERT I know Steve, *I know* why you're here.

STEVE She said this about you.

ROBERT What?

STEVE That you get angry quickly.

ROBERT She told me about you too.

STEVE Did she?

ROBERT About the problems.

STEVE What problems?

ROBERT Exactly.

Have you made up your mind?

STEVE What about?

ROBERT Are you a drinker of whisky?

STEVE Alright.

ROBERT You are?

STEVE Yeah, I'll have one.

ROBERT Good.

STEVE

ROBERT Good boy. Better.
Doing better.
He pours one. Gives it to STEVE.
There.
They drink.

STEVE It's good.

ROBERT Mine is. You've got the cheap stuff.
It is late and overcast now. Dark. Windy.
JASMINE arrives at a bar. A BARMAN comes over.

JASMINE I want the strongest drink.

BARMAN I'm sorry?

JASMINE The most alcoholic drink you sell.

BARMAN Look, it's only five.

JASMINE Are you a clock?

BARMAN What?

JASMINE Cos you look like a barman, you work in a bar, but you're
telling me the time. It's quite simple, I want to get as drunk
as I can, as quickly as possible, so –

BARMAN Absinthe.

JASMINE Two please.

BARMAN One for you and one for...

JASMINE The sheer hell of it. Come on...

She reads his name badge.

Paul.

Paul! This is urgent.

I need to get off my face...

JASMINE *hits the bar suddenly. Come on!*

The BARMAN pours JASMINE her shots. FREYA follows the two MOTHERS to a picnic, listening to 'Happiness' by Goldfrapp. The sky is clouding over, getting darker.

Meanwhile, CARTER is waiting in the street. SARAH approaches him, windswept, and unhappy.

SARAH I'm late I know. Long day. Where are we going?

CARTER Don't you have an umbrella?

SARAH Clearly not.

CARTER This way.

They go off, under his umbrella.

The group of MOTHERS in black with black prams and sunglasses appear again. They dance and sing, holding their wrapped-up babies, showing them to each other, drinking their coffee and ignoring FREYA.

They sing and dance to 'Happiness' by Goldfrapp.

FREYA watches them, and tries to take part.

After a while FREYA takes a headphone out and speaks to them.

FREYA Excuse me?

MOTHERS Yes?

FREYA I'm here for the picnic.

The MOTHERS look her up and down. Smile in a fake way.

MOTHERS Not being funny but –

FREYA Okay.

MOTHERS Yeah.
FREYA My baby's kicking.
MOTHERS How sweet!
FREYA Not in a good way.
MOTHERS Ahhhh.
FREYA Do you worry about the future?
MOTHERS Not really.
FREYA What might happen?
MOTHERS No.
FREYA What might happen to your children?
MOTHERS Henry's very bright, he's already reading.
 He'll go into hedge funds
 Or a surgeon.
 Something like that.

FREYA How was the birth?
MOTHERS Natural.
FREYA How do you manage with it all?
MOTHERS Easily.
FREYA None of you got down about it?
 None of you felt your child was a...
MOTHERS A?
FREYA A mistake?
MOTHERS No. God. No.
FREYA And what about people who are poorer than you?
MOTHERS We do what we can.

FREYA Yes but –

MOTHERS Charity work. Every Thursday. Primrose Hill. We carbon-offset holidays.

You know.

FREYA But that's not enough, and if it's not enough, then what's the point.

Aaaahhh!

She clutches her belly again. They look at her for a moment, more serious now, almost threatening. They stand, wielding their children, almost like weapons.

(Over singing.) Call me an ambulance. .

Please.

Please!

The singing continues.

Then they slowly encircle her.

She is scared but has nowhere to go.

The women throw the babies up in the air.

They explode into black powder, like soot or dust, that covers everyone, and is blown about by the wind.

The music continues as the women disappear, FREYA falls to the floor, and the lights fade.

End of Act Two.

ACT THREE

Prologue

1973.

ROY, DANIEL *and* ROBERT.

ROY *and* DANIEL *are looking through a few sheets of paper.* ROY
is smoking.

ROBERT It's just a preliminary document. To give you some idea of
the way it's going.

ROY We understand what it is.

ROBERT So you know where it's headed. I thought it would be good
to get your... views.

At this stage.

ROY You think this is what will be in the final report.

ROBERT The way it's going yes.

ROY You can't imagine that they'll be any... surprises.

DANIEL New factors.

ROY New factors yes, still to come.

ROBERT I can't see how there would be no.

ROY Right. Can't see how there would be.

DANIEL Hmm.

ROY Because the thing is, these aren't really the results we were
expecting.

DANIEL They're not meaningful.

ROY Meaningful.

Exactly.

What do they tell us?

ROBERT Quite a lot actually. If you do this sort of work it's clear that releasing huge quantities of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere at such a high altitude will cause heat to be reflected rather than released, potentially causing rising temperatures and –

ROY No.
Robert.
Hang on.
With respect.
All that you've just said, that tells you a lot.
It tells *us* very little.
We wondered if there was any way you could make them *meaningful* to us.

ROBERT

ROY If there was a way the report could focus on something that we can understand. Because if there was. A clearer *focus*.
This could be the start of a very fruitful relationship.

ROBERT Yes but this is –

ROY As we spoke about.

ROBERT Right.

ROY Perhaps it's a question of how you present it.
Perhaps it's as simple as that?

ROBERT

DANIEL Or maybe you need some more resources.
To see things clearly.
Is that what we're talking about?
Are we talking about resources?
Or should we discuss the fee?

ROBERT It's not about money...

DANIEL Of course.
 DANIEL writes on a piece of paper.
 He passes it across. ROBERT reads it.
 I think you should keep going. There's six months before the
 final report. That's a long time. Anything could happen.

Mad Bitch

The evening. Dark.

FREYA is at the reception of a hospital. She meets MARYNA, a Polish cleaner, who is playing 'I Am Not a Robot' by Marina and the Diamonds on a tinny radio.

FREYA You have to help me.

MARYNA Nie potrafie mowie po angielsku. [I don't understand English.]

FREYA It's hurting. It's really – Ow!

A RECEPTIONIST comes over.

MARYNA Jestem tulko sprazatacza, / idz ee znajdz lekarza. [I'm just the cleaner, go / and talk to a doctor.]

FREYA This is a hospital you have / to help me.

RECEPTIONIST Alright...

MARYNA She says it hurts.

RECEPTIONIST I can see that.

MARYNA looks FREYA in the eyes.

MARYNA Po burzy zawsze slonce przychodzi. [After the storm, the sun always comes.]

RECEPTIONIST Thank you Maryna, I'll deal with it.

MARYNA *picks up her mop and watches.* Now what's your name?

FREYA I'm not telling you my name.

RECEPTIONIST You can't be treated until we / have some information –

FREYA I'm pregnant. You have to treat me.

RECEPTIONIST Let's just start with a / name, can you give me a

FREYA I pay my taxes, the whole point is you treat me so treat me I don't want to talk to you, where's the doctor?

RECEPTIONIST You will see a doctor, I'm just trying to get some details. How / long have you been –

FREYA I'm not telling you anything, I don't like you, I'm in pain. It's kicking so hard. Ow!

RECEPTIONIST How many weeks? FREYA

RECEPTIONIST How many weeks?

FREYA Let me in!

A young doctor, TIM, comes in.

TIM Is there a problem?

MARYNA I think you should let her in.

JASMINE is knocking on COLIN's front door.

COLIN Alright!

As the receptionist takes FREYA into the hospital, MARYNA watches, then walks away.

A baby is crying somewhere. The rhythmic sound of a heartbeat.

COLIN answers the door.

JASMINE I'm wet as fuck.

COLIN It's not a good time.

JASMINE Can I come in or what?

COLIN What?

JASMINE Funny.

She walks past him into the house.

COLIN She's not back till late.

JASMINE Never is these days. She's got a reception till nine, then a late meeting, checked with her secretary, went over, had an argument today, so I know.

COLIN You went to her work?

JASMINE I'm not interested in her anyway that's not why I'm here.

She looks at the house.

I hated it when you moved. That was my house. I loved that place. But this is so... *House and Garden*. Yeah... none of my mates are around got exams or whatever so I thought you'll be on your own and you could probably do with a laugh so I brought a bottle of tequila. And a spliff or two, or three.

COLIN I don't really smoke illegal drugs, it's sort of frowned on for —

JASMINE You should.

COLIN For husbands of government ministers.

JASMINE You should, given everything that's happened to you.

COLIN A drug habit? Right.

JASMINE You lost your job.

COLIN I'll find something else.

JASMINE To take?

COLIN A job.

JASMINE You probably wanted kids but she's past it now.

COLIN Not really.

JASMINE No she is, well past it, trust me.

COLIN I mean we don't want kids.

JASMINE The house must feel empty, with you here, on your own all day.
She lights a cigarette.

COLIN You can't smoke inside, you know that.

JASMINE She isn't here.
So. Why can't you get a job? Too old is it?

COLIN In their terms, and I've never been one of the city boys really. Never done that stuff.

JASMINE What stuff?

COLIN Cars, booze, coke.

JASMINE Strippers.

COLIN Exactly. Strippers. God.
A moment.
And you're right, it's not been the easiest of months for her either, so she tends to take it out on... well...

JASMINE You.

COLIN People.

JASMINE You. It's all got a bit bleak recently, hasn't it?

COLIN Why are you here?

JASMINE I'm your fairy godmother.
She offers him a cigarette.

COLIN I don't smoke.

JASMINE If you're gonna have a mid-life crisis, better have a fucking good one. It won't kill you.
He takes one. She lights it.

She pours two shots of tequila.

Bad things are happening. Let's stick our heads in the sand.

They drink.

SARAH *is in a restaurant with* CARTER.

CARTER For me, a restaurant is never about who will be here, but who certainly won't. And there are a lot of people who certainly won't be here. The wine's excellent, the meat isn't local which in London is a good thing, the service is eight out of ten. The cheese. Well, the cheese is something to write home about. Dear mother I have just tasted the most delightful cambozola –

She gives him the sheets of paper.

Oh.

Straight to business. Thank you.

SARAH Why don't you tell me what they are?

CARTER Well. They are... results. Of some tests. Photocopies of the originals I think. It's a preliminary report by Robert Crannock... your father yes?

SARAH Why did you send them?

CARTER Me?

No I didn't send them. I don't know anything about them.

The waiter comes over and pours some wine. SARAH drinks straight away.

SARAH Alright well, why *might* someone...

CARTER Why *might* someone have sent them?

SARAH Exactly, yes, let's *imagine*.

CARTER Well these are signed by your father, the results of a project he did for the largest airline in the UK, oh hang on that's my company isn't it? Yes I remember this, a project over twenty years to investigate whether emissions from aircraft would

have any lasting impact on the environment. Now this report seems to suggest that clearly, yes. Yes.

A huge impact.

These emissions would prove disastrous, for the world.

SARAH Right. That's what he thinks.

CARTER But that wasn't his conclusion Sarah. Not at the time.

For twenty years, his public reports said the opposite. That burning fuel, and carbon emissions, would have little or *no effect*. It was one of the main factors in the expansion of the industry. So the question we... sorry. Not me. The question you have to ask yourself is why would he do that? For twenty years.

When he knew the truth. Why would he lie?

Of course, everyone makes mistakes, we don't mind it took him twenty years to work it out, but if it were revealed that he knew *all the time*... in green circles he's a god... if this came out, his reputation would collapse.

And you're his daughter. Perhaps it would rub off on you.

I presume he was paid. I wonder how much?

SARAH *smiles*.

SARAH Yes.

CARTER Yes?

SARAH You're right. The public should know. I'll give the report to the press in the morning.

CARTER You will.

SARAH Absolutely. And thank you, because this is a lovely restaurant, the wine is delicious, and especially for this, because I think my father deserves whatever he gets.

CARTER Really?

SARAH You should've done your research. I hate him.

I'm more than happy to disown him publicly. Any excuse.
So sorry, John – no more runways.

She drinks from the wine.

CARTER I like the way you hold the glass. By the stem.
It's impressive. You're wasted.

SARAH Not yet.

CARTER In politics, I meant.

CARTER takes the papers off her.

You'll forgive the attempt? This sort of thing normally works on politicians. They get scared. Because most politicians are geeks, as you know Sarah. That's why they're so ugly.

The waiter arrives again.

But you.

You're not ugly at all. You're... striking. Intelligent. So what are you doing?

What do you want?

SARAH What do I want?

CARTER To eat.

SARAH Oh.

CARTER I've done my best. It didn't work.

So, let's relax now, eat, drink.

Enjoy ourselves. Make a night of it.

Let's talk like men do.

The sound of a baby in the womb.

TIM is standing with FREYA.

TIM We've run all the tests. I'm pleased to say, it's perfectly healthy.

FREYA I've been smoking. And drinking. I fell over in the bath.

TIM She's fine.

FREYA Other mothers aren't like this.

TIM Women often go through many feelings, but when you give birth –

FREYA You should get rid of it. The baby. Before it's too late. Ow!

TIM It's not possible.

FREYA You do it all the time.

TIM Not in these circumstances. She's too advanced.

FREYA If I was a cave woman, I could do it myself. Punch myself in the stomach.

Or wait till it was born and hide it or bury it or something. Maybe I will. I thought this was civilised. I thought I had rights.

TIM We are civilised. You do have rights. But at this stage, so does your daughter. Is someone picking you up?

FREYA I'm on my own. There isn't anyone. I'm staying here.

I need to stay here.

TIM We don't have room.

FREYA Sign a piece of paper and it's done – what?

TIM What's really the matter?

FREYA I keep on telling you, there's something wrong.

TIM Not with the baby?

FREYA I was out all day, I saw so many people and none of them cared. Are you a good doctor?

TIM Are you a good patient?

FREYA Good patients would tell you their names.

TIM I'm Tim.

FREYA Hello.

TIM Hello Freya.

FREYA Oh, you know.

TIM Found your wallet in your bag. Now all we need is an address.

FREYA Good hands.

TIM Thanks.

FREYA I bet you keep your girlfriend happy.

TIM Boyfriend actually.

FREYA Boyfriend right, I bet you wouldn't leave him by himself if he was having a baby.

TIM Hard to say.

FREYA I'm not very happy at the moment. Brave face, but I'm struggling. You should let me stay.

TIM Freya I can't unless you're in for a... Do you want to see her?

FREYA Who?

TIM Your daughter.

FREYA No.

TIM If you see her, you can stay the night. That's the deal.

TIM *smiles.*

FREYA You're just like my husband.

TIM In what way?

FREYA He's always smiling too, like nothing's wrong.
She winces with pain.
STEVE *looks, very seriously, at ROBERT.*

STEVE It's a nice house.

ROBERT Jealous.

STEVE Not really.

ROBERT Small flat you've got. She finds it claustrophobic.

STEVE Is that what she said?

ROBERT What do you think? Is she happy? With the house? Is she happy? With you?

 These are the questions.
 Point is, you don't know.
 What do you do Steve?

STEVE I'm sure she mentioned it.

ROBERT Of course, but – I want you to be proud of it, Steve. I want you to declare it.

STEVE I'm a writer.

ROBERT You're a writer. Good. Of?

STEVE Books. Sort of trivia books.

ROBERT Sort of trivia books. That's right. What sort of trivia books?

STEVE For the Christmas market mainly, they're like stocking-fillers.

ROBERT And what do they like, fill the stocking with. What are they called?

STEVE The latest one was *Fifty Shit Things About Britain*.

 ROBERT *Fifty Shit Things About Britain*. Wow. Steve.
 Wow.

 That's what you think? That Britain's shit.

STEVE Yeah, nothing to be proud of really.

ROBERT Well I don't know, there's always your book.

STEVE We're working on a sequel actually, for this year.

ROBERT *Another Fifty Shit Things About Britain?*

STEVE *Fifty Shitter Things About Britain.*
They sell very well.
The first bought the flat.
This one's for Emily.

ROBERT Emily?

STEVE ...

ROBERT Tell me some of your shit things.

STEVE Look, this isn't the point, I'm not here to chat –

ROBERT Why not? Are you staying? Tonight?

STEVE You said a hotel.

ROBERT There isn't one, and it's terrible anyway. Stay here.

STEVE No.

ROBERT Why not? Scared?

STEVE It doesn't feel right.

ROBERT What does that mean, 'doesn't feel right'?

STEVE To stay under your roof.

ROBERT You don't know me.

STEVE I know what you did to them.

ROBERT What I *did* to them. I didn't *do* anything. I said things. I told them the truth. *Did something*, sounds like you're implying I hit them.

STEVE No.

ROBERT Or fucked them something like that. You're not implying something like that are you?

STEVE Of course not.

ROBERT Then watch your fucking language.
Choose better words.

Stay. And we'll talk. We'll find the time. Later on. Yes?

STEVE Okay.

ROBERT Good. Now, tell me why Britain's so shit.

JASMINE and COLIN have wine and are quite stoned.

JASMINE I feel so fucking aimless Colin, I want to go where I want, do what I like, spend money, I want to shout all the time. Cos it's bullshit, just everyone, isn't it? Pushing emails around, shall we meet? Shall we have a pre-meet? How about Thursday? I'm busy Thursday, well how about we meet to work out when's good, let's pencil that in, fucking about on Facebook, events, messages, profiles, pretending to have friends, and I don't mind but none of it's *achieving* anything, it's one big 'general meeting', just chatter, and when it all fucks up, which it will, just statistically, historically, when it all goes pear-shaped, they'll be full of regrets. 'I should've slept with him, I should've gone there, done that while I had the chance.' And I never want regrets Colin so while I still can I'm gonna fuck some shit up.

COLIN I've never done that.

JASMINE What?

COLIN Fucking... shit... or...

JASMINE Oh Colin.

COLIN I've found for the sake of dignity it's better to stay away from the... shit.

JASMINE We have to sort you out.

COLIN lets out a long strange depressing sigh.

SARAH and CARTER in a bar – more relaxed now.

Cocktails and a night-time view over London.

SARAH I have a fundamental belief in the role of government. I'm very clear about that.

CARTER Sarah, it's wonderful your clarity.

SARAH And we're very different you and me.

CARTER Different in many ways, I'm not denying that, I'm simply saying that with your skills, contacts, your background, you don't know how much you're worth.

SARAH I'm not interested in money.

CARTER A thousand a day, possibly more.

SARAH It's not what motivates me.

CARTER I know I know, okay, but the improved quality of life that's something else. I spend my evenings with my children. Do you spend your evenings with your children?

SARAH I don't have any children.

CARTER You don't have any children alright, do you see much of your husband?

SARAH Enough.

CARTER Enough?

He smiles – you see?

SARAH We're going through a... thing at the moment it's not... oh.

CARTER This is what I mean.

SARAH Fuck. What am I doing? I'm telling you about my *marriage* why am I telling you about that? Jesus. Shut up Sarah.

CARTER We're just talking.

 SARAH *drinks her mojito.*

 But alright so quality of life, that's not a factor either, because there are important things you care about. I understand. Targets, limits, carbon trading, an international agreement. How's all that going by the way? Cos these days I don't hear so much about it.

SARAH There's a lot of momentum to get something done.

CARTER Momentum.

SARAH Yes I know I know alright.

SARAH *grabs a waiter.*

Can I get another mojito?

He goes.

CARTER Come on Sarah, you like things to *happen*. You know really that the solution will lie in utilising the market. Technology and innovation.

SARAH Carbon-ingesting algae you mean?

CARTER Carbon –

SARAH An orbiting umbrella.

CARTER Sarah, you're being / naughty.

SARAH No no, my favourite – turning the Moon into a huge solar panel.

CARTER That's kind of how innovation *works*. It's *new*? If people will pay, the world will change, fast. The internet existed for ten years, no one had it, but as soon as it could do adverts it went in every home.

SARAH The environment is longer term, less quantifiable, without government incentivising industry there won't / be any commercial activity.

CARTER Sarah, *Sarah*! You could be doing so much more than incentivising. This is what I'm saying. There aren't many people around like you. If you were in business you could solve environmental issues right now, you could save lives and build economies and you could do it quickly. And then after work you'd go home to your big house, your happy husband, and do what you like. Concerts, painting, cooking.

SARAH I used to like cooking.

CARTER What's your husband's name?

SARAH Colin.

CARTER Colin? Right. Colin?

They both smile.

Right.

SARAH He's an amazing man.

CARTER I'm sure he is.

SARAH But when I come in these days he just looks at me.

CARTER Because you're killing yourself with this half-arsed government when you're capable of so much more. He knows it. I know it.

SARAH Well...

We'll have to wait and see.

CARTER Wait for what?

SARAH The next election, see where we are.

CARTER That could be three years.

SARAH Slowly slowly –

CARTER Why wait?

SARAH You mean...

CARTER Come to us in the new year.

SARAH I thought we were talking theoretically.

CARTER No.

SARAH You want me to work for you.

CARTER Well actually Sarah, if you came across, I would be working for you.

She looks at him.

Proper salary, resources, investment, whatever you want. An expense account. Leading the field. Clean up the industry, from the inside. You tell us what to do.

SARAH This is an offer?

CARTER A great big offer. You get what you want.

SARAH Yes.

CARTER And so do we.
They look at each other.

SARAH You're a clever boy.
She drinks. This is the deal.

CARTER The things you could do Sarah. So much bigger than planes
and runways.
ROBERT, STEVE *and* MRS ANDREWS *are having dinner.*

ROBERT Did you fly here Steve?

STEVE I didn't have much choice.
ROBERT *looks at him.*

ROBERT You haven't read my books have you?

STEVE I had a look today, while I was waiting.

ROBERT You had a *look*?

STEVE A skim, yes.

ROBERT They aren't difficult, even Mrs Andrews managed them.

STEVE Your books aren't why I'm here.

ROBERT Mrs Andrews, let me explain. Steve is worried about his
wife. Now I haven't spoken to any of my daughters for
twenty years. They don't like me, they're doing their own
things – My eldest is the environment secretary.
My youngest is at university. And Freya. What she does I
don't know. She's pregnant, does that count?

STEVE She's a teaching assistant.

ROBERT Yes, she helps deaf children or something, but quite
strangely one evening, Steve got home and found his wife
had gone. Where? Well he eventually discovered that she

had got on a train and come up to Scotland, to talk to her dad. And yes. We spoke. You gave her fruit cake.

MRS ANDREWS Aye.

ROBERT Very appropriate in retrospect, because after she got home, she wouldn't tell her husband what we spoke about. He knew where she'd been, but Freya refused to talk. She wouldn't even say why she went in the first place. I presume she's become unhappy. Confused.

STEVE She hardly leaves the flat any more, she cries at night.

ROBERT Right, so then even more strangely, Steve decides to fake a business trip and come and talk to me himself. Not realising of course that if he needs to do that then there's much bigger issues at stake.

STEVE Like what?

ROBERT Like not what I said to her.

STEVE Okay.

ROBERT But why she won't talk to you. Why you're sneaking up here without telling her.

STEVE I need to know what's happening.

ROBERT I'm in two minds as to what to say, Mrs Andrews. Steve's come all this way. But do I betray the trust of my daughter, and get involved or do I keep my mouth shut, for once?

They look at each other.

The problem is Steve, that it is, in fact, all about my books. If you want an answer, you'll have to understand some science. You'll have to listen. And it won't be humorous. It's very interesting, but there aren't any *laughs*. Can you deal with that?

STEVE Go on.

ROBERT Everything in the planet is codependent. It exists in ever-changing, ever-evolving balance much like a gigantic

organism itself. Did you get that far with the books?

STEVE Yes / I did.

ROBERT Species live and die and evolve and the planet evolves too through cycles of hot and cold and responding to the demands of life, and life responds to the demands of the planet. But the problem is –

MRS ANDREWS Global warming.

ROBERT You see, there's a keen brain under all that – Global warming, yes. You know how that works. Of course you do. You've seen *Blue Peter*. And people draw their graphs, they show the rise in temperature, they show a small but steady rise, they say it can be limited, you know by how much?

STEVE A couple of degrees?

ROBERT Two degrees yes, as long as we recycle, do you recycle Steve?

STEVE Yes.

ROBERT And insulate our homes, I expect you've done that too.

STEVE Looked into it –

ROBERT Of course you have I'm sure you've got a bag-for-life, and all that makes you feel better I know but it's a complete waste of time because the global climate has never been interested in two-degree anything. If we look at geological records of historical climate change, the onset of the last ice age for instance, we see there is no steady climb, no year-by-year increase. There is in fact a relatively stable climate system, and then something happens, the system is stretched and in a moment, it collapses and changes, in hundreds not thousands of years. You understand?

STEVE ...

ROBERT Let's imagine this house is a planet. What regulates the climate?

STEVE The thermostat?

ROBERT Mrs Andrews. When the house is too hot she opens windows, when it's too cold she switches on the heating. She brings in new material to eat or drink, and she removes the waste when I'm done. She cleans the air and the ground and she regulates my life, don't you? We are symbiotic, she would not exist without me. I couldn't live without her.

STEVE Right.

ROBERT But she's very unhappy at the moment Steve. Because when the population is doubled like this, her systems are stretched. The house gets hotter, quicker, food and drink are consumed at twice the rate, the floor is twice as dirty. She's under pressure, but is there a steady increase in her anger? Can you detect a slow rise in her temperament? No. She's stable, she's holding it together. But there will come a day, if you stay too long Steve, when the system's been stretched too far, and she'll snap. Suddenly she'll take away your sofa, she'll hide the food, leave the heating on, steal your phone and spit in your drink, she'll do everything in her power to remove the problem. To remove you. And she'll succeed Steve, you'll be gone, because she's stronger than any of us.

We were part of system, a relationship, and we abused it. The world will be fine in the end, and it knows what it wants. It wants to get rid of us.

MRS ANDREWS The end of humanity.

STEVE *looks at them.*

STEVE Can we get back to Freya?

ROBERT You don't believe me?

STEVE I don't see how it's relevant.

ROBERT The end of humanity not relevant?

STEVE To what we're talking about, no.

ROBERT Mrs Andrews. He doesn't believe me.

You think I'm a strange old man.

Pause.

ROBERT *stands up, goes to STEVE, grabs him.*

Up.

STEVE What?

ROBERT We're going.

STEVE Where?

ROBERT The end of humanity. We're going to see it.

JASMINE *and COLIN are smoking a spliff.*

JASMINE I'm not wearing underwear.

I never do.

COLIN Uncomfortable.

JASMINE It makes life that bit more exciting. You should try it.

COLIN I don't think it's the same with men.

COLIN *stares. Fixed. Empty. Nothing for a moment.*

JASMINE *looks at him. He's blank.*

JASMINE Colin!

What's gonna change?

She pokes him.

Come on!!!

What's *happening*?!

She pokes him.

Pokes him again.

Keeps on poking him.

Poke poke.

He looks at her.

Then he stands up.

What? What?

Have I pissed you off now?

Goes to the CD player. Picks a CD. Puts it on.

What are you doing?

'Rebellion (Lies)' by Arcade Fire plays.

What's this?

COLIN Arcade Fire.

JASMINE Okay, yeah I remember them.

COLIN is standing moving a bit.

COLIN Freya gave it to me one Christmas.

Used to play it in the car.

COLIN starts to dance to it, very awkwardly. He knows the words, but is not used to moving his body.

JASMINE Oh.

My.

God.

COLIN You like it?

JASMINE Er... I...

JASMINE is amazed.

COLIN dances.

Yeah.

COLIN sings along, loudly now.

COLIN Sleeping is giving in,
no matter what the time is.
Sleeping is giving in,
so lift those heavy eyelids.

People say that you'll die
faster than without water.
But we know it's just a lie,
scare your son, scare your daughter.

*As he goes he grows in confidence, he starts to let go. There
is a kind of beauty to it.*

JASMINE *is laughing and smoking.*

CARTER *pays for the drinks at the bar.*

CARTER You look different Sarah.

SARAH What?

CARTER You look younger.

SARAH *smiles.*

COLIN *dances with things in the room. Bashes around.
Starts to go crazy. No ironic moves. He means it.*

*He pulls JASMINE up. Dances with her, sings to her. She
can't believe it.*

COLIN People say that your dreams
are the only things that save ya.
Come on baby in our dreams,
we can live on misbehaviour.

Every time you close your eyes
Lies, lies!

Every time you close your eyes
Lies, lies!

Every time you close your eyes
Lies, lies!

Every time you close your eyes
Lies, lies!

Every time you close your eyes.

JASMINE You're mental!

COLIN Every time you close your eyes.
Every time you close your eyes.
Every time you close your eyes.
He lets himself go completely.
FREYA and TIM. *The music playing underneath.*

FREYA She's not kicking any more.
She seems happy. I think she likes you.
She smiles.
Maybe she could be a doctor, do something good.
He smiles.

TIM Back in a minute.
He goes out.
CARTER and SARAH *are outside in the rain under an umbrella.*

COLIN People try and hide the night.
Underneath the covers.
People try and hide the lie.
Underneath the covers.

Come and hug your lovers
Underneath the covers.
Come and hug your lovers
Underneath the covers.

Hide it from your brothers.
Underneath the covers.
Come and hug your lovers
Underneath the covers.

CARTER There's a fifty. For the cab.

SARAH It won't be that much.

CARTER Buy something for your husband.
SARAH smiles, gets in a cab and drives off through the city.

COLIN *continues to dance and mime along with the words.*

COLIN

People say that you'll die
faster than without water,
but we know it's just a lie,
scare your son, scare your daughter,

JASMINE is going as mad as he is. They dance close

Scare your son, scare your daughter.
Scare your son, scare your daughter.

She kisses him suddenly.

He stops her. Stands back.

They look at each other as the music continues to play.

JASMINE sits. Relights the spliff.

COLIN *listens to the music a bit, then fades it down and switches it off.*

We hear the sound of the storm outside.

ROBERT *is walking with STEVE up to a tree.*

ROBERT

There's a nest in this tree. Redwings, beautiful patterning.
They were the reason I moved here. I found the birds, bought
the house nearby.

STEVE

I'm asking about / Freya.

ROBERT

The birds were endangered and climate change was the
cause apparently. So I thought, they will be my barometer.
Like the ravens in the Tower, when they leave, it's over.
They said rising temperatures were driving them elsewhere.
What do you think?

STEVE

Doesn't feel warm right now.

ROBERT

Well exactly, how could you know it was the air
temperature? If you want to understand these things, you
have to look at the entire system, the mountains, the animals,
the air, the sea, it's infinitely complicated Steve, but that's
what I do, I sit in that shed and I try to see the future.

STEVE Just you and your shed.

ROBERT Every model suggests things are going to be worse than anyone imagines. I've seen something terrible,

STEVE You're the only one who's noticed.

ROBERT People say they want the truth – facts, and figures, but actually they want to be told it can be avoided, with minimum effort. When Neville Chamberlain came back from Hitler. He said he had a peace treaty, said he could *trust* this obviously evil man. Why did he believe it? Why did *we* believe it? Because we had to, or we'd be facing untold horrors. Always Steve, faith will come before truth. That's who we are.

STEVE Freya's read your books, she knows what you think, so why did she come all the way up here?

ROBERT They all know what I think. Best way to reduce the carbon footprint?

STEVE What?

ROBERT No foot. You want to be green?

STEVE Okay –

ROBERT Hold your breath. The planet can sustain about one billion people. We currently have six billion. So in the next hundred years it will balance the books. You understand?

STEVE I don't –

ROBERT Five billion people wiped from the face of the Earth in a single lifetime. Mass migration away from the equator, world wars, starvation...

STEVE And Freya –

ROBERT Freya came to ask my advice about children.

STEVE And what did you say?

ROBERT You have to understand –

STEVE What did you *say*?

ROBERT I told her that her child will regret she was ever born. Hate her mother for forcing her into a terrible world.

 I told her to do whatever it takes.

 I told her to kill it.

 STEVE *looks at him. Horrified.*

 TIM *is operating the ultrasound on FREYA.*

We see a very blurred image. Of something. Faint sound of the womb.

TIM There. Can you see?

FREYA No.

TIM Look.

FREYA I can't see anything.

 STEVE *and* ROBERT.

STEVE You told her to kill it.

ROBERT Yes.

STEVE Emily.

ROBERT It's a / fetus.

STEVE We're calling her Emily and I've no idea what's going to happen, but she's there, and growing, and she's my child too, not just Freya's, she's much more important than your theories... your fucking *birds*.

ROBERT It's not just theory / it's

STEVE You had no right. No right to say that to her.

ROBERT It's the truth.

STEVE You listen! To me.

ROBERT The birds? You want to know about / the birds?

STEVE For once, you listen. You had no right to say that to her. Do you understand?

ROBERT Steve!

STEVE No –

ROBERT The birds had gone before I even moved in.

STEVE moves away, to avoid hitting him.

It's Weimar time, it's *Cabaret*, across the world. You feel it, we all do. We know there's nothing to be done, so we're dancing and drinking as fast as we can. The enemy is on its way, but it doesn't have guns and gas this time, it has wind and rain, storms and earthquakes.

STEVE Just shut up. / Shut up.

ROBERT This isn't theory. This is *death*, this is *loss* and *pain*. Freya's not the first to suffer, and she won't be the last.

STEVE She's beautiful and clever, but she's not strong, she came up here for help. She wanted her dad to make her feel better.

ROBERT Then she came to the wrong person.

STEVE What did she do?
What did she do when you told her?

ROBERT The world as it is, a disgrace.
The world as it will be, unbearable.

STEVE I have to get back. I couldn't get through to her at home.
She's gone somewhere.

ROBERT You can't get back now.

STEVE She might be killing my baby, so –
STEVE leaves.

ROBERT She had to know the truth.
It's better it never lived.

TIM is still trying with the ultrasound.

FREYA You aren't what you seem.

TIM I'm sorry?

FREYA I saw you. Through the glass. Talking to the nurse. Ow! It's started again.

TIM I just need to find the...

FREYA I teach deaf children at school. Part of my job.

TIM Really?

FREYA Means I lip-read.

TIM Oh.

FREYA Mad bitch.
Waste of time.
Then you both laughed.

TIM It was a joke.

FREYA No. It's what you think. And it doesn't matter except I thought you were the good thing, you were the last glimmer.

And then you went out.

Aghh!

She hates you now.

On the screen is a very clear image of a fetus.

TIM I've had a long day. I'm sorry.
But look.
There she is.

Things'll seem better.
She'll make a difference, won't she?
When she's here.

FREYA Yes.

She will.

She will make a difference.

The foetus is on the screen. Kicking.

Its mouth moves and we hear a small voice.

FOETUS Mummy?

FREYA It spoke.

TIM What?

FREYA It moved its mouth.

TIM It's just –

FREYA No. I lip-read. It's speaking.

FOETUS Mummy? Mummy?

Help.

Help me.

Sound of the womb getting louder and louder.

Sounds like an earthquake.

Mummy?

Shaking.

The foetus turns its head to face us and screams. Blackout.

End of Act Three.

Interval.

ACT FOUR

Prologue

1991.

ROBERT *is watching television in the dark, drunk. A door opens onto a hall where bags are packed. SARAH comes in.*

SARAH I've packed enough for a week, for all of us, but we'll have to come back for the rest at some point, if you're serious about all this. There's too much, there's all the baby things, the nappies, the sheets, the toys, the bottle, I mean I can't fit the cot in my car, we'll have to get a van or something, I don't know, if you're serious.

I don't know if you are serious but if you mean what you said, I'm going right now.

ROBERT With you I tried.

SARAH What?

ROBERT Everyone had said if you have a child you'll change, you'll know what to do, everything will fall into place, and so I went into the hospital on the day you were born and there was your mum sat in the bed, and she gave you to me, to hold, and I looked at you, and I waited.

For that moment when I would feel like a father.

The moment everyone spoke about, when I would love you, completely, above anything else. But it wasn't happening.

I looked over at your mum and she smiled. It had happened for her.

I looked down at you.

Still nothing.

So I looked up at your mum and smiled back, and right then, I started pretending. A few years later we had Freya, and Jasmine, and every moment, all the time, I wasn't a father. I never felt it.

But now she's gone, now your mother's dead, there's no reason to pretend. She was the one I loved. Just her. Yes. I'm serious.

SARAH What work?

ROBERT What?

SARAH You said you had work to do, that you needed to focus.

ROBERT I've got to *stop pretending*.

SARAH looks at him. Very upset. Holding it in.

SARAH So every time you've hugged me and talked to me at bedtime, and drove me to university –

ROBERT Yes.

SARAH All the hours we talked, all that was –

ROBERT You believed it at the time.
That's what mattered.

A baby is crying.

SARAH I left Jasmine with Freya.

Coldly, SARAH goes over and kisses ROBERT.

ROBERT You look like your mother. That's what I can't deal with.
You all look just like her.

SARAH exits, leaving the door open. The baby cries.

Don't have children.

Don't ever bring me grandchildren.

He turns back into the room, facing away from the door.

We hear the ten-year-old FREYA's voice.

FREYA Daddy?

ROBERT Go away.

FREYA I found this dress. I think it was Mum's. Can I have it? I like the flowers.

ROBERT Don't touch a thing.

FREYA Daddy?

ROBERT Leave me alone.

FREYA Daddy?

ROBERT No!

FREYA I'm pregnant.

 ROBERT *turns. Facing him is thirty-year-old FREYA, pregnant, holding the dress.*

 What do I do?

Growing sound of white noise again, like a rumble, maybe like water, building up into...

Thomas Hood

Early in the morning.

Light just on FREYA in her hospital bed. She gets out of bed fully dressed, and puts her bag on.

She puts her headphones in and presses play, and sets out.

MARYNA, the Polish cleaner from before, sees FREYA and starts singing 'I Am Not a Robot'.

FREYA leaves the hospital with MARYNA, and passes a group of men smoking outside. FREYA steals one.

The man steals his cigarette back.

FREYA Oh.

FREYA walks down the road into the city, with MARYNA, and picking up some other commuters behind her. They walk with her, singing.

As FREYA starts to become happier, the commuters stop and lift her up and around, as she sings.

They put her down and they run – into Covent Garden! Various street performers appear, including a robot performer, a juggler, a few tourists, and some kids.

FREYA plays with them all, hopscotch, eating fruit from a stall, dancing with a waiter.

Everyone dances. A marching band appears, some people dressed as animals. People on TV in shop windows joining in. Everything moving. Signs, shops, the sun!

Huge lights, glitter from the ceiling, or a newspaper seller throws her free papers in the air. Ushers dancing and singing in the audience.

PETER appears, looking for FREYA. Everyone starts moving off, going about their normal boring business. MARYNA goes home.

The newspaper seller clears up her papers, slightly confused, and leaves.

FREYA starts to text on her phone.

FREYA is crying, and texting, she leans against a wall and sinks down to her knees. PETER taps her on the shoulder.

PETER Hello miss.

FREYA Oh / no.

PETER Was that you singing?

FREYA You're supposed to be at home.

PETER I know but I got bored it's all box sets and nothing in your flat, led me to a complete feeling of apathy sat around like that, I see what you meant now, so I thought I'd come and

find you, you don't mind do you? You look terrible. Not being rude but you look completely white. Like someone addicted to heroin. Or someone that's dead. What are you doing?

Dark clouds appear. White noise.

FREYA Nothing. Leave me alone.

She gets up and walks off, still texting.

He waits for a moment, then follows her.

The white noise turns into radio in a cab office. STEVE is arguing with MRS ANDREWS.

MRS ANDREWS Forty minutes

STEVE No, I've been here all night, I'm not waiting any longer.

MRS ANDREWS Well I'm sorry but they said the driver's on his way and a Ford Focus only goes so fast in this weather.

STEVE Ford Focus? Jesus.

MRS ANDREWS It's no bad thing you learn a lesson. You may be worried, you may want to get home but you can't beat nature. You can't hold back the tide.

STEVE Well we can.

MRS ANDREWS What?

STEVE That's exactly what the Thames Barrier does. Stops the tide coming in. We build tunnels, we fly, we go to the Moon, of course you can beat nature –

STEVE receives a text message. He reads it.

We can do what we want, and right now I want my fucking taxi. So.

He looks up.

Forty minutes, you're sure?

White noise.

SARAH *has made breakfast in the kitchen.*

COLIN *comes in.*

SARAH Late night?

COLIN Can you not?

SARAH I made some tea.

She puts it on the side.

COLIN Shouldn't you have gone by now?

SARAH I want to talk.

COLIN I know I know, we made a mess, we'll tidy up. Don't worry, go.

SARAH I've made a decision.

COLIN A decision?

SARAH I've had an offer.

COLIN Right... you're...

SARAH I'm going to resign. Take a new job.

COLIN Look, I've got a headache.

SARAH In the commercial sector. I'll start in the new year.

I was. Wrong. Colin.

I'm sorry.

You come first.

COLIN *smiles.*

What? That's funny?

COLIN You're going to work for a company?

SARAH A multinational company, position on the board maybe. It pays well, the hours are better.

COLIN You used to throw things.

SARAH I... what?

COLIN You used to throw things through windows.

SARAH I'm sorry Colin you're not making sense.

COLIN You'd bunk off work, go into town and shout your lungs out. Protesting against whatever it was, I'd come and pick you up round the corner.

SARAH Well thankfully I've grown up so –

COLIN Wearing those dresses, you used to get in the car, your face would be red with shouting, and your hair down, you'd have thrown something at some bank, or the police and you'd jump in the car and say drive – just drive, and we'd speed off, like a film, in my Volvo.

SARAH You hated all that.

COLIN At least we argued about things that mattered.
Now you want to be on the board.

SARAH I thought you'd be pleased. I thought you'd at least talk to me about it.

COLIN Look.

SARAH What?

COLIN We hate each other.

SARAH I don't hate you.
They look at each other.
It's Jasmine.

COLIN No.

SARAH She's been talking, making you like this, while I'm the one mopping up, dealing with her fucking...

COLIN Just fun.

SARAH Her *vomit*, I take her to the doctor, pay her rent, credit cards and –

COLIN It's not Jasmine.
A moment. SARAH picks up the tea, offers it.

SARAH Are you going to drink your tea?

COLIN You should go. You'll be late.

JASMINE *comes down, in her nightdress, smoking a cigarette.*

JASMINE Tea! Great.

JASMINE *She takes it off SARAH and drinks.*

SARAH You can put that out Jasmine. You know not to smoke inside.

JASMINE I'm not smoking.

SARAH This is my house.

JASMINE Yeah, it looks like you.

SARAH What?

JASMINE Dated. Subsidence, dry rot. Cracks beginning to show. In desperate need of redecoration.

SARAH I've done everything for you and you're...

JASMINE Do you know what comes before part B?

SARAH What?

JASMINE Part A!

SARAH For Christ's –

JASMINE Come on that was funny.

SARAH You're like Dad. Just like him.

JASMINE Wouldn't know would I?

SARAH Colin can we have a conversation...

JASMINE We should take you shopping today Colin, find you some new clothes, sort you out, what do you think?

JASMINE *SARAH's phone gets a text message. She picks up the phone, looks at it, puts it in her pocket – looks at COLIN.*

COLIN Good luck with your job.

SARAH *goes, upset.*

JASMINE We so got it on last night – alright, we didn’t exactly get it on but you were a bit frisky for a minute or two – alright maybe you weren’t a bit *frisky*, but your heart was going like bang bang bang, bang bang – alright maybe not bang bang bang but –

COLIN I nearly told her I wanted a divorce.

JASMINE Oh.

COLIN Just now.

JASMINE Because of us? Cos you’re great Colin but I don’t know if I want a proper relationship.

COLIN Don’t be stupid Jasmine.
I’m serious.

JASMINE ...

COLIN So what do you think?

JASMINE A divorce? Don’t know.

JASMINE’s phone gets a text. She picks it up. Shrugs.

Things change.

A hint of white noise. JASMINE reads her text.

STEVE, tired and unshaven, comes into the living room and picks up his bag. ROBERT is there.

ROBERT Did you call her?

STEVE She’s texted. She wants to meet.

ROBERT Good, she wants to meet. Good.

STEVE You’re right she’ll have a difficult life.

ROBERT Freya?

STEVE Emily. She’ll not have the things we had, maybe.

ROBERT That’s right.

STEVE The world could be terrible. It could be.

ROBERT Yes.

STEVE But she'll be clever, like her mum, so that's good, and she'll have a practical attitude which comes from me. An intuition.

ROBERT This isn't the point Steve.

STEVE I think it is. The point. I really think it is. Even if things do get difficult, really tough, like you said, the world'll be better with her in it. She'll add something special.

ROBERT Don't you think all fathers think this?

STEVE No, not all fathers. No.

ROBERT ...

STEVE And anyway this isn't the future, she's already there, thinking, learning. Sucking her thumb, listening.

ROBERT You like things simple. I understand. Fair enough. You don't want to think about it.

 ROBERT *laughs, sits down. The taxi beeps.*

 Do what you want. Not my problem any more.

 STEVE *picks up his bag, takes out a book and gives it to*
 ROBERT.

STEVE My book.

ROBERT Your book.

STEVE There's something on page thirty-seven you'd recognise. It's about angry old men who think they're prophets and stand on street corners with signs, shouting at anyone who walks past.

ROBERT Fascinating.

STEVE They want the world to end when they do.

ROBERT Really?

STEVE And they smell.

ROBERT What?

STEVE Because they're on their own, they smell, a bit, of piss.
Don't get up.
He leaves. ROBERT sits in the chair. White noise grows.
TOM's phone rings. He's in his underwear, just woken up.
SARAH has arrived at work, and is trying to get through.

SIMON The PM says half an hour this morning but only if it's important.

SARAH Say it's vital.

SIMON Are you sure?

SARAH Use that word when you tell him.

SIMON / 'Vital'.

TOM Hello?

SARAH Tom. This is the secretary of state for energy and climate change we spoke yesterday, you came to visit.

TOM How did you get my number?

SARAH I've been thinking about what you said and I wondered if you'd be around for lunch.

TOM Lunch?

SARAH Yes. Today. Somewhere nice.

TOM I've only just got up.

SARAH That's fine. Get dressed. You've got a tie?

TOM I'm a student.

SARAH I'll send a car. He'll bring a tie. Half-twelve?

TOM How do you know where I live?

SARAH 44 Lonsdale Road.

TOM Yeah but –

SARAH Perfect. Half-twelve. See you then.
She hangs up.

SIMON Minister, what are you doing?

SARAH I'm cooking.
FREYA is walking down the street followed by PETER, walking behind her.

PETER Did you walk all the way here?

FREYA Yes.

PETER Like Dick Whittington?

FREYA What?

PETER It's a pantomime.

FREYA I know what it is. / Jesus.

PETER I saw *Dick Whittington* at the Hexagon in Reading.

FREYA Peter –

PETER It had Les Dennis in it. It was a bit embarrassing all round I thought. But anyway in that he walks to London and becomes mayor. Maybe you'll become mayor.

FREYA I've had enough. I want to stop.

PETER Or perhaps you're here because of the earthquake.
She stops.
It's supposed to happen today.

FREYA I know, I know it's *supposed* to but –

PETER Right so when it does you'll need a sidekick. Dick Whittington had a cat, I can be the cat?
She turns away from him.

FREYA I'm imagining you. The drink or the pills in hospital or some kind of paranoia, schizophrenia something like that, the blood rushing to my head.

PETER There's a long history of earthquakes in the capital. One in 1580 killed two people and made everyone think that it was Judgment Day.

FREYA Peter... / shut up.

PETER Another one in 1931 originated in Yorkshire but made chimneys fall down in Clapham. The most recent was in 2008. They happen quite a lot.

FREYA You should be interested in girls or something.

PETER I am.

FREYA I'm tired.

PETER I am interested in girls or / something.

FREYA Why isn't there ever anywhere to sit down!?

She sits down on the ground.

 They say when you give birth, the pain is unbearable. That's why women forget. Your skin tears, there's blood and there's shit and you scream and it feels like you're going to die.

She scratches at her stomach a bit.

PETER You still got my flower?

She has the flower stuck in her bag.

FREYA I like it.

PETER You should keep going miss.

FREYA Why?

PETER I think you're nearly there.

 That way.

 FREYA *stands and carries on.* PETER *smiles and follows.*

Liberty, on Carnaby Street.

 JASMINE *sits with a* LIBERTY WOMAN, *waiting for* COLIN.

JASMINE I'm not going to steal anything.

LIBERTY

JASMINE Do you have to wear all that make-up?
You must be depressed working in a shop like this, standing here all the time, you look really depressed.

LIBERTY This isn't just a shop.

JASMINE What?

LIBERTY This is Liberty.

JASMINE But how much do you get paid?

LIBERTY I'm sorry?

JASMINE It's probably not much is it?

LIBERTY What do you do?
JASMINE shouts through the changing room.

JASMINE Colin! You know how to get dressed right?
No reply.
You should break out, come with us, what's your name?

LIBERTY Liberty.

JASMINE That's the name of the shop I meant what's *your* name?

LIBERTY It's my name as well.

JASMINE Coincidence.

LIBERTY Not really. I wanted to work here from when I was fourteen. I love this place, the people, the lighting. Most items cost well over two hundred pounds. I used to come here for hours and walk around and touch things. Then when I was eighteen I applied for the job. I put Liberty on the form, as my name. I thought it would get their attention. I was right. When I got the job, I applied to deed poll, so my bank details would match. I wear this amount of make-up so my skin tone goes

exactly with the colour of the walls? And you'll notice my clothes coordinate with the posters, and the sign outside.

JASMINE Well, *Liberty*, that's brilliant but we're drinking ouzo and you should blow this off, come and have a laugh with us.

LIBERTY You and your dad?

JASMINE He's not my dad. We're together, out on the town, we're going to have it, what do you think?

She looks at LIBERTY and smiles.

LIBERTY No thanks.

JASMINE Can't believe you're called Liberty. What was your old name?

LIBERTY Nicola.

JASMINE I like Nicola.

LIBERTY Nicola's shit. Liberty's better. What's your name?

JASMINE Jasmine.

LIBERTY Who called you that? Your mum or something?

JASMINE ...

LIBERTY Jasmine doesn't mean anything. Liberty's better.
It means freedom.

SARAH, TOM and CARTER in a restaurant.

CARTER How are you feeling today?

SARAH I'm feeling really good, thank you.

CARTER Stronger constitution than the country you're running. Not many people can say that. Who's this?

SARAH This is Tom.

TOM Hi.

CARTER Work experience?

SARAH Tom's a friend.

CARTER Hi Tom. Nice tie.

TOM She said we were going somewhere posh.

CARTER Posh? Here? No. This isn't posh.

SARAH I met Tom yesterday. He has family in Eritrea. Do you know where that is?

CARTER There are so many countries aren't there? Africa or something probably? We don't fly there, I know that.

TOM The crops don't grow any more. The temperature is rising year on year. The people, my family, they're getting to the point where either they move or they die.

SARAH Tom doesn't really approve of your plans.

CARTER What are you doing Sarah?

TOM You think your suit looks really good don't you?

CARTER It's not about what I think, actually, Tom, it's a fact.
This suit is really impressive.

SARAH Tom tried to blackmail me. He thought at the time Heathrow wasn't enough he heard I was due to make an announcement and he demanded a complete halt to air-travel expansion. Now, I gave him hell because I don't like to be blackmailed. As you know. I told him I hadn't made up my mind.

CARTER Which turned out to be true.

SARAH But speaking to my husband this morning, he mentioned how I used to throw things at the windows of large corporations like yours. As you know we're going through a difficult time at the moment but he seemed to think I was more attractive back then, and I could see what he meant.

CARTER Oh I get it, you're making a *point*, she's *using* you Tom. Well look, Africa's a pretty shit place to grow vegetables global warming or not, what with the sun and the desert and the *civil war*. Maybe your family should move, get away from it

all on one of our nice big planes, or is that not the point you're making?

SARAH I was reminded why I went into politics, Tom and I / aren't so different.

CARTER I know a fantastic therapist, Sarah, if that's what this is really / about.

SARAH So I gave Tom a call, asked him to join us.

CARTER This thing with *teenagers* / it's *strange*

SARAH Then I called the Prime Minister's office to bring forward the meeting.

CARTER The Prime Minister?

SARAH I sat down with him and put forward my case.

CARTER You did.

SARAH A total halt to expansion, guaranteed. No more runways, control, terminals, nothing, right across the country. I said he had to be firm, make a lasting decision. I told him a strong message on this would unite the government, and be popular with the country.

CARTER And what did he say?

SARAH He's very green. He's got a wind turbine on his roof. Next week, we announce. It's over.

CARTER *smiles at them.*

In Liberty.

COLIN *comes out from the dressing room. He's wearing a very expensive suit, shirt and tie, with new shoes. He's had a haircut as well. He looks fantastic.*

JASMINE Wow.

COLIN Is it alright?

LIBERTY How does it feel?

COLIN Not sure. How much is it?

LIBERTY *gets out a calculator.*

LIBERTY Well, with the suit, the shoes, the tie, the shirt. The cufflinks, the vest, the care cover, you'll want that, the socks, the laces...

Five thousand pounds and forty-four pence.

COLIN Oh my god.

LIBERTY Perhaps your girlfriend would like something of her own?

COLIN She's not my girlfriend.

LIBERTY She said she / was –

COLIN Is that what you told her?

JASMINE No.

COLIN Jasmine!

JASMINE Colin!

COLIN She's my wife's sister.

LIBERTY Oh just your... well... that explains it then.

JASMINE What?

LIBERTY Why she's trying so hard.

A moment.

Anyway what do you think?

Shall we put it through?

Is it something you think you could own?

SARAH, TOM *and* CARTER.

CARTER Tom, do you have a computer?

TOM Yeah.

CARTER Phone?

TOM Of course.

CARTER You drive a car?

TOM And get to the point?

CARTER All of them developed for profit. It's how we progress. But Sarah thinks we've reached the first moment in human existence where we have to stop, and go backwards. She thinks this moment is entirely different to anything that's ever happened.

TOM But the world *is* / different. It has limits.

CARTER There will be more air travel Tom. Because people want it. People have the right. To be free, to make their own choices.

TOM What's more important, a stag weekend in Amsterdam or the entire nation of Tuvalu sinking underwater? Six flights a year to a second home, or starving families in Eritrea?

CARTER I admire the passion Tom, and clearly you're a bright boy with huge potential but is this really what you want to do? You could come with me in a minute, I'll show you round the office, I'll pay your university fees, and before long you'll be eating in restaurants like this, with beautiful people and respect and all the resources you need to protect the people you love. Or, you could end up serving in restaurants like this, on the edge, struggling financially, a slow crawl to last place. Sarah's just made the wrong decision, there are so many women like her, lonely, past it, no children but she needs a project, so now we're all her fucking children, stupid and careless and in need of protection, and that's fine, she's nothing, she'll be forgotten, but it's not too late for you Tom, what do you think?

SARAH Tom's got what he wanted.

TOM What?

SARAH This is a good day for him.

TOM This isn't / what I wanted.

SARAH Like me, he just wants things to be fair.

CARTER So you're not enjoying the restaurant Sarah? Or the bar last night? Your big house? / Nice holidays?

SARAH I'm not denying people their lifestyle but –

TOM Why / not?

SARAH There has to be a balance between –

CARTER You should've seen the salary we offered her. And we never ask twice so –

SARAH I'd rather eat my own shit than work for you.

CARTER Sort of thing you'd actually do. And anyway –
A bit of bread hits CARTER – What.

TOM Shut the fuck up.
– thrown by TOM, who's standing up. SARAH smiles.

SARAH Good shot.
He throws another bit at SARAH.
Hey.

TOM No.
We shouldn't be flying at all.

CARTER Ah, now, you see?

SARAH Tom.

TOM No *expansion* still means thousands of flights every single day. You've all had your whole lives to sort out the planet, and you've done precisely nothing. Now, according to the best scientists, we've got about five years left before it's too late, so you'll forgive me if I don't wait for the next *election*, you'll understand if I'm *impatient*. Because while you continue to have conversations like this, in London restaurants, in government lobbies and Notting Hill gardens, while you show off your little wind turbines, and while you're talking and talking, you're still doing absolutely fuck-all. And meanwhile, the clock is ticking, the ice caps are

melting, people are dying and it's my generation who'll pay the price, long after you're both dead, so I think this is the turning point. Right now. I'm going to sleep with more sisters of elected politicians, I'm going to handcuff myself to railings, I'm going to attack police, issue bomb threats. Until something is done, something *real*, I'm going to add to the long and noble tradition of direct action.

He takes a plate and smashes it on the floor.

There are children dying that shouldn't be dying.

Lifestyle? Fuck your lifestyle.

He kicks over a chair.

Cunts. All of you. Are you embarrassed? You should be.

TOM *leaves*. CARTER *smiles*. SARAH *drinks her wine*.

A busker appears and starts playing.

FREYA *is now walking with PETER by the Houses of Parliament.*

FREYA My dad says, in a few years, they'll look back, on the ruins of London, when the city's underwater, and the old people will say, do you remember walking down Oxford Street? The view from St Paul's? By that time there'll be heatwaves, storms, even this earthquake might be caused by us they think. Something to do with ice sheets crashing into the sea. Decreasing amounts of sediment between the tectonic plates.

PETER I think it's God.

FREYA What?

PETER Don't you think if there is a God, he's pissed off? Like when you leave a mug in your room too long and it grows into this rank horrible green pus. You throw it away when that happens don't you? You get a new one. Start again.

STEVE is in Victoria Station, a man in a polar bear costume approaches him. He is holding a bucket of money.

STEVE I'm in a hurry.

POLAR BEAR I'm dying.

STEVE Do you know where the Tube is?

POLAR BEAR I know my whole habitat is disappearing down the tube, I know that.

STEVE Right, excuse me.

POLAR BEAR Melting icebergs, whole ecosystems eradicated, maybe you could spare a few pounds?

STEVE I don't have any change.

POLAR BEAR I'll do a dance.

STEVE Can you get out of my way?

POLAR BEAR It's a good dance.

STEVE Who are you?

The POLAR BEAR reveals his face.

POLAR BEAR It's Rag Week. Greenpeace.

STEVE Can you just / get out of the –

POLAR BEAR Cheer up, might never happen.

STEVE struggles with the bear, pushes past and off.

*A YOUNG MAN, dirty and sweaty, runs up to FREYA
grabs her arm.*

YOUNG MAN Please! Please.

FREYA Oh. You... How was –

YOUNG MAN I'm sorry but my kid! My kid's in hospital, I've just found out, I need the bus fare to get down the road, I don't have any... change... I'm sorry, I'm really in a hurry, I'm really sorry. Shit. Shit.

FREYA You asked me this yesterday.

YOUNG MAN What?

FREYA About your kid. I gave you five pounds. You said exactly the same thing then.

YOUNG MAN Oh. Right, yeah yeah.

FREYA You don't... have a kid, do you?

The YOUNG MAN looks at her – of course he doesn't. He runs off – the POLAR BEAR leaves as well. A rumble.

PETER Depressing, isn't it?

Come on.

FREYA looks at PETER.

FREYA Peter. What's going on?

PETER What?

FREYA You don't make sense, following me.

PETER I register very high on the autism spectrum. It's the sort of thing I'd do.

FREYA You're not even that convincing. Shouldn't your voice have broken by now?

PETER Yes, that's true, it should've broken by now.

FREYA Right. So. Peter. What's going on?

PETER I think I have some kind of purpose. Maybe it's to do with the earthquake. Sometimes people imagine a figure who represents death, the bringer of bad news, a man who will guide them from this life into the next. I could be Peter, at the gates of heaven.

FREYA My version of death is a sullen fourteen-year-old boy with behavioural difficulties?

PETER He takes many forms.

FREYA walks away, upset.

Or I maybe I'm a herald.

FREYA What am I supposed to do?

PETER Peter Rabbit. At the rabbit hole.

FREYA I don't know why I'm here, or where I am, I don't want the baby –

PETER Miss –

FREYA – but I can't get rid of it, my family hate me, not a single friend has called me all week.

PETER Miss –

FREYA I'm a fuck-up, a fuck-up, on my own. A complete fucking MESS.

She looks at her belly.

I don't want you! Little fucking...

She punches it.

PETER Miss! I can feel it.

FREYA What?

PETER It's time.

FREYA Peter, I've had enough!

PETER I'm a carrier signal.

FREYA A what?

PETER Someone wants to talk to you and they're using me to get through.

This is the moment when... The time has come. This is the moment.

FREYA The moment?

PETER *starts to remove his hoodie and his glasses.*

PETER This is the moment when I...

Who are you thinking of most?

The moment when I...

Who do you think of all the time?

FREYA I don't –

PETER Who are you thinking of right now?

FREYA Emily.

PETER Emily, yes.

PETER *lets his hair down.*

PETER *Now revealed is a sixteen-year-old girl.*

EMILY Hello Mum.

EMILY *A long pause.*

EMILY *They look at each other.*

FREYA *starts to cry. Horrified. She backs away.*

FREYA Mum –

FREYA I don't... – Oh god... you're all *grown up*. Oh god.

EMILY *looks upset.*

FREYA *pulls herself together and tries to smile.*

FREYA Sorry.

FREYA Sorry.

FREYA Your hair.

FREYA It's a bit like mine.

EMILY I've got dad's nose apparently.

FREYA Yeah.

EMILY His sense of direction too.

EMILY *They look at each other.*

FREYA I look shit to you, probably.

EMILY Well...

FREYA *reaches out and touches her on the arm.*

FREYA What are you doing?

FREYA Maybe we could, have a coffee. Do you like coffee?

EMILY We don't have time.

FREYA But that's what mums and daughters do. They have a coffee together. They talk. Don't have time before what?

EMILY No, we should go.

 FREYA *follows* EMILY.

 JASMINE *and* COLIN *are walking along the river.*

JASMINE Five.

COLIN Shut up.

JASMINE Five girls so far, checking you out.

COLIN Right.

JASMINE How many before today?

COLIN When I was twenty a girl came up to me pinched my bum she obviously thought I looked good from behind but when she turned me round and saw my face she went urrrgh, and walked away.

JASMINE You've had a tough life haven't you?

COLIN Fuck it.

JASMINE Exactly, you know where we're supposed to be going?

COLIN The South Bank. This way.

A woman walks past and checks COLIN out.

JASMINE Six.

COLIN !

She chases after him.

 FREYA *and* EMILY.

FREYA What are you into?

EMILY What?

FREYA For fun. With your friends.

EMILY I...

FREYA ?

EMILY Football.

FREYA *tries to smile.*

FREYA That's good.

EMILY Mum I –

FREYA Do you have a boyfriend?

EMILY Am I gay you mean?

FREYA No. I just.

EMILY I play football so I must be gay.

FREYA No. I didn't mean that.

EMILY Yeah / okay.

FREYA What do you want to do when you grow up?

EMILY I'll finish school, get a job somewhere probably, I don't know.

FREYA Ambitions...?

EMILY No point is there? I mean there's nowhere to go. You don't understand. Look at you. Thought when you were younger you'd look better.

FREYA What have I done? Why are you being like this?

EMILY Are you joking?

FREYA ...

EMILY When you've been drinking, you sit on the sofa and apologise again and again. 'I'm sorry, I'm sorry *Emily*.' Then you fall asleep, spill it everywhere. I have to put you to bed.

FREYA What about your dad?

EMILY Dad left ages ago. Only see him Saturdays.
Come on.

FREYA What?

EMILY We don't want to be late.
EMILY escorts FREYA onwards.
STEVE is on the South Bank.
A JOGGER jogs past on the way to work.

STEVE Excuse me.
She comes to a stop.
I'm... meeting someone by the theatre, where's the...
theatre?

JOGGER The theatre? I don't know.

STEVE Oh, okay –

JOGGER I don't go to the theatre.

STEVE Okay – I just...

JOGGER Why would I go to the theatre?

STEVE It doesn't matter.

JOGGER It's just like TV. But more expensive. And further away.
STEVE stops and waits.
FREYA and EMILY are walking along Waterloo Bridge.

EMILY You know where they've put the London Eye now?

FREYA No.

EMILY Bath.

FREYA Why?

EMILY Good question. After the flooding it was going to go on tour
but no one had the money so they had a public vote and Bath
it was instead.

You ever been on it? The wheel. I read about Bath in a book once. Looked nice...

FREYA No.

They stop.

EMILY So what have you done?

FREYA What?

EMILY What do you do? Day to day.

FREYA I... don't really... I find it all quite...

EMILY You find it all too much.

FREYA Yeah.

EMILY You can't cope.

FREYA I've never found it as easy as I think you're supposed to.

EMILY is looking out at the view.

Have we stopped then?

Is this where you're taking me?

What am I supposed to do here?

EMILY You've texted Dad haven't you?

FREYA Yes but –

EMILY And Jasmine, and Sarah.

FREYA To meet me. I want to talk to them.

EMILY Look where we're standing. Waterloo Bridge.

FREYA ...

EMILY You wanted them to watch you. Mum, if you could see what's going to happen. The buildings and the parks are shanty towns. Immigrants everywhere, gambling and drinking, the streets – covered in shit, the air thick with smoke, there's disease and rationing, blackouts and curfews. Every morning when we fetch the water we have to queue

for an hour, and at night you keep a knife by the side of your bed, just in case. I hate it. So do you. Everyone has given up. You're passed out on the chair, but I'm in the bed, under the covers, desperately trying to get a message to you. It's what you tell me. It's what you say you should've done, for both of us.

FREYA I'm sorry, I've really been trying.

EMILY It's not too late. Just step over the barrier.

FREYA looks at her.

Then climbs over the barrier.

Get used to it. Breathe. I'm sat inside you. Warm and happy and I won't know anything about it. You have my entire support to throw yourself off. It's better you do. I promise.

FREYA looks out.

Breathe. And then, imagine there's a step. Just step out. They say most people die of shock before they hit the water.

A few people gather around, at a distance to watch.

EMILY stands amongst them, disappears in the crowd.

FREYA Emily?

PASSERBY 1 Who is she?

PASSERBY 2 I don't know she just climbed over, but look at her.

PASSERBY 1 Yeah.

FREYA Emily...?

PASSERBY 2 Just one of those women.

PASSERBY 1 / Yeah, god.

FREYA Emily, please!

PASSERBY 1 Why does she keep on shouting?

PASSERBY 2 Who knows? Emily! Fuck! Sorry – shouldn't laugh.

Has someone called the police?

STEVE *is on the South Bank.*

JASMINE *and COLIN arrive.*

STEVE She texted you too?

JASMINE Yeah she didn't say you were coming though, could've left you to it.

STEVE Colin, you look –

COLIN Yeah.

STEVE She's supposed to be here supposed to be here by now but –

JASMINE She gets distracted by bright colours. Don't worry, it's quite normal. She takes her time. Oh no.

SARAH *appears.*

SARAH Proper family gathering. Steve, she said you were away.

STEVE I was.

SARAH She's texted everyone. What's happened to you?

COLIN Right.

JASMINE Colin's got something / to tell you.

SARAH So where is she?

STEVE I don't know.

SARAH Drags us all out here then doesn't show up herself, / pretty typical.

STEVE I hoped she'd be waiting here, but –

SARAH What do you mean Colin's got something / to tell me?

STEVE Has anyone spoken to her? Sorry. / Has anyone actually spoken to Freya?

SARAH Colin?

COLIN Maybe we should –

SARAH I didn't take the job. You were right. I turned it down.

JASMINE He wants a divorce.

SARAH Oh... you... For fuck's sake Jasmine he buys a new jacket, you think he's having a mid-life crisis. He doesn't want a divorce, we're just –

JASMINE Ask him.

SARAH I'm not going to ask him.

JASMINE Ask him.

COLIN I think perhaps we should...

SARAH What? Should what?

COLIN I think perhaps we should.
Yes.

STEVE Is that...

JASMINE What?

SARAH We're, we're not going to talk about it here.

JASMINE You mean on / the –

STEVE / Yeah.

SARAH In front of her and everyone else. We need to –

COLIN Sarah.

JASMINE / fuck, fuck, shut up. *Shut up.*

SARAH I'm not doing this *now*.

JASMINE On the bridge.
They all look.
A crowd has gathered on the bridge – traffic passes. It is noisy. A POLICE OFFICER has arrived.

FREYA In 1844 Waterloo Bridge was called the bridge of sighs, there were so many suicides.

POLICE OFFICER I want you to stay calm.

FREYA Thomas Hood wrote a poem about a homeless woman who threw herself off.

POLICE OFFICER You're going to be alright.

FREYA One more Unfortunate,

POLICE OFFICER Slowly come back/ over the barrier.

FREYA Weary of breath, Rashly importunate,

POLICE OFFICER Help is / on its way.

FREYA Gone to her death.

PASSERBY 2 / Come on. Fuck's sake, get on with it.

The crowd laughs.

FREYA Make no deep scrutiny
Into her mutiny
Rash and undutiful:

FREYA's phone rings.

PASSERBY 2 JUMP JUMP JUMP JUMP...!

FREYA Fuck fuck shit...

The crowd chants. FREYA answers her phone.

STEVE Baby, it's me. I'm here. I can see you.

FREYA Steve... I'm scared. But I can't... They...

FREYA cries. Someone in the crowd starts playing 'Jump' by Kris Kross. The crowd chant.

STEVE Please. Climb / back down on to the road.

FREYA Who was her mother? /
Had she a sister?

STEVE Calm down, listen. / I'm on my way.

There is a rumbling drowning the rest of the noise. The ground shakes.

An earthquake. The bridge is moving.

FREYA In she plunged boldly –
 No matter / how coldly
 The rough / river ran –

STEVE Please don't. Freya. / I know what the problem is.

FREYA Cold inhumanity, /
 Burning insanity,

STEVE Freya. Freya. It's okay. I understand.

The rumbling is loud now. The earth moving.

FREYA Steve. I don't know what to do. I don't want the baby, I
 really can't have a baby.

STEVE We'll work it out –

FREYA There's a noise. It's moving. Shaking. The bridge.
 Everything's *moving*!

STEVE Hold on and / just wait or

FREYA I don't want to hold on – I can't wait any more – It's *too*
 late! This is important. Where have you *been*! This is *it*!

The earthquake is very loud.

Oh god oh god, it's the earthquake. Just like they said.

I can't, I can't do anything.

Please please no.

Emily.

It's breaking.

I can't hold on! I... I can't!

She slips.

Blackout.

The sound of destruction.

An earthquake.

End of Act Four.

ACT FIVE

Prologue

As the noise fades, an animation plays.

We see blackboard animation that illustrates the story. The narrator is old and wise.

NARRATOR It is said that in the old times, in the early years of the twenty-first century, mankind only thought of himself. The people would steal from the land and plunder the seas, they would kill the animals, tear out the minerals from the ground and poison the sky. And as the Earth grew darker, the Sun burnt brighter, and the sea began to rise, the people simply closed their eyes and drank, and danced, and attempted to ignore their certain destruction.

It was then, in mankind's greatest hour of need, that Solomon came. A young woman, accompanied only by one faithful companion, packed her bag, and came to the city of London. After three days, walking barefoot, she arrived on the bridge across the river, at the centre of the Earth, and she spoke. Her words proclaimed the new enlightenment.

She was young, and so full of hope and truth that her speech, her words, the power and the light, was relayed, repeated, across the world, by radio, by television, by powerful rumour and written instruction to every man and woman on the planet and slowly slowly, the tide turned. People listened and people changed. Solomon spent the rest of her life travelling the world, walking a new path, showing us the future, a new way to live.

And the people of the world were happy. They were saved and they rejoiced.

The blackboard bleaches to white.

Certain Destruction

2525, or possibly a hospital. A beeping sound.

A clean white space.

FREYA is lying on a single white bed.

A WOMAN appears. She looks like GRACE, and wears a white version of the floral dress from the Act One Prologue. She also wears a veil.

GRACE Freya. Freya?

FREYA wakes. Tries to sit up.

No, you don't need to move.

FREYA I was in the river.

GRACE You're safe now.

FREYA These aren't my clothes...

GRACE How do you feel?

FREYA Where am I? Where is everyone?

GRACE It's just me. Try to focus. You've been asleep a very long time.

FREYA What do you mean?

GRACE You're in the future.

FREYA The future?

GRACE The year Twenty-Five, Twenty-Five.

FREYA You're joking.

GRACE You're alive. You're warm. You're safe. And now you're awake.

Have a drink.

Here.

A glass of water.

FREYA takes it, and drinks.

FREYA Who are you?

GRACE I'm Grace.

FREYA My mum was called Grace.

GRACE Yes.

FREYA But she died. There was nothing they could do. It was cancer.

GRACE We don't have cancer any more.

FREYA Good.

GRACE We don't have diseases or pain, we don't have suffering or death, we have only peace. Peace and life.

GRACE *strokes FREYA's hair.*

FREYA She used to stroke my head like that.

Can I...

FREYA *removes GRACE's veil.*

Mum...

GRACE Hello Freya.

FREYA Mum!

I was so scared! I didn't... I didn't know what to do.

FREYA *hugs her and cries.* GRACE *hugs her tight.*

GRACE You're safe.

You're safe now.

Hospital.

FREYA *is in a hospital bed, on a ventilator, unconscious.*

STEVE *is watching her. He paces.*

TIM *enters.*

TIM Mr Sullivan?

STEVE Yes?

TIM I was the doctor who treated your wife. They said you had some questions.

STEVE When she came in, didn't you think there was something wrong?

TIM She was worried about the baby but we tried to put her mind at rest, we let her stay in overnight, and then in the morning she checked herself out. We had no reason to think she would... well.

STEVE You just let her go.

TIM It was our assessment that she would be fine.

STEVE Just let her walk out the door by herself.

TIM She said she didn't have anyone to collect her.
They look at each other.

STEVE What do you think?

TIM I'm sorry –

STEVE Does she have a chance?

TIM I'm sorry, it's not my department.

STEVE I'm sure you've spoken to your colleagues before coming in here, you all *talk*, don't you? You wanted to know the situation before you confronted the husband. So you know the situation, what do you think?

TIM They're conducting some tests.

STEVE But what do you think?

TIM

STEVE If there isn't a chance, you should tell me. If there's nothing any of us can do any more and we should all just give up, I'd rather know.

TIM I'm sure there's a chance. STEVE

TIM You might want to talk to her.

STEVE Why? She's in a coma. Why would I talk to her?

TIM Some people find it helpful.

STEVE ...

TIM Is there anything else I can do?

STEVE Her family are outside. Can you... make sure they have what they want, tell them what's going on, get them whatever they need.

 And keep them out.
 I don't want them coming in here.

 TIM *goes.*
 2525.
 The music plays again. GRACE enters.
 FREYA *is sat on the edge of the bed.*

FREYA So – Dad bought into one of those cryogenic things and we've all been frozen at the point of death, you as well, revitalised only when medical science has the power to heal us.

 GRACE *smiles.*
 Is that right?
 GRACE *just looks at her.*
 Is that what's going on?

GRACE You look better.

FREYA I feel better. I want to have a look round. The future! Have you got flying cars?

GRACE We don't need cars.

FREYA And robots.

GRACE You have no idea.

FREYA When can I see?

GRACE When you're well enough.

FREYA I'm fine, look.

GRACE We have some questions first.

FREYA What about?

GRACE Freya, the date of your preservation is of vital historical significance. It is said, that this was the turning point. The moment you fell, the place it happened, legend has it that it was from that place at that time that the speech was made. From the bridge. From that moment. The tide turned. The world became better, and better until we solved the problems. All the problems. And we survived.

 So. Did you hear it? Did you hear the speech? Is that why you were there?

FREYA No. I don't know anything about it.

GRACE This is important, you were on the bridge, in that time.

FREYA Yes but –

GRACE Why were you on the bridge, if not to hear Solomon's speech?

FREYA Solomon?

GRACE Yes.

FREYA Solomon on the bridge?

GRACE Solomon, the greatest woman in the world, she walked to London, stood at the centre of the Earth and changed everything.

FREYA Solomon... Mum. It's not Solomon. It's Sullivan.

GRACE What?

FREYA It's me. I walked all the way to the bridge, I stood in the centre of the Earth.

GRACE But Freya...

FREYA I'm Solomon. I changed the world.

GRACE Freya you can't be.

FREYA Yes! Why not?

GRACE Because you died.
And Solomon...
Solomon lived.

SARAH and COLIN are in the hospital café. SARAH brings back two coffees.

SARAH There.

COLIN Thanks.

They drink.

How are you?

SARAH *shrugs.*

They drink.

SARAH Do you remember the jacket you wore at Suzie's party?

COLIN What?

SARAH I just thought of it. You remember? It had shoulder pads.

COLIN Yes.

SARAH It was far too big.

COLIN My lucky jacket.

SARAH Well, that's what you used to call it –

COLIN Yeah.

SARAH Lucky in what way exactly?

COLIN It got attention.

SARAH You looked stupid.

COLIN Like I said, attention.

SARAH Well...

COLIN From the birds.

SARAH Birds. Jesus.

COLIN Got your attention.

SARAH You used to roll up the sleeves.

COLIN Nothing wrong with that, not in the eighties.
He rolls up the sleeves of his jacket.
See?
She smiles.
Good look.
He unrolls them.

SARAH Probably just ruined it.

COLIN What?

SARAH That jacket.

COLIN What do you mean?

SARAH Just... that it... looks expensive, you probably shouldn't –

COLIN Not your problem now is it?

SARAH Colin...

COLIN What?

SARAH I was trying to –

COLIN What?

SARAH

COLIN We shouldn't talk about this now.

SARAH When you lost your job yes I probably thought I should
compensate in some way. I know things aren't like they
were, I know I'm *different* these days. But I don't think it's
too late.
I'll change.

Or something.

COLIN Do you like this suit?

SARAH Yeah, I mean...

COLIN Honestly.

SARAH ...

I don't think it's very... It's not who you are.

COLIN I love it. I really do.
It is absolutely, who I am.
It absolutely is.

SARAH ...

SARAH reaches to him.

He moves away.

SARAH Do you even like me?
I mean.
You say you've fallen out of love with me and that's...
fine... that's...
You don't want to see me any more.

COLIN

SARAH But do you think I'm a nice person?
Because, with what everyone's said.
With Freya.
And what Jasmine says.
I don't have anyone else.
So this is kind of crucial.
Colin?

Do you like me?

COLIN You live in a million-pound house with two cars. You're a
Liberal Democrat minister in a Tory government. Then you
tell me you want to join the board of a multinational airline.
It's not that I don't like you Sarah. I hardly know you.

Jasmine was right.

SARAH Jasmine's never been right about anything.

COLIN ...

SARAH What did she say?

COLIN Things change.

They look at each other.

2525. FREYA is on her feet now.

FREYA Then... then I have to go back and do what I was supposed to do.

GRACE Back? Freya you can't go back. That world crumbled to dust hundreds of years ago. This is all that exists now.

FREYA But I was supposed to say something. That's why Peter was there. And Emily. I wasn't supposed to fall, I was supposed to speak. The crowd was there, ready to listen, I was supposed to give them the message.

GRACE Freya come and sit down.

FREYA But I messed it up. There must be something you can do.

GRACE It's too late.

FREYA Mum!

GRACE Sit down!

FREYA No. I'm getting out. I've got to find someone who can help.

I...

Oh.

Where's the door? There isn't a door.

GRACE No.

FREYA How do you get in and out?

GRACE Freya.

FREYA What?

GRACE You don't need to go anywhere. Everything's good here.
Everything's perfect.

FREYA And where is everyone? You keep on saying we think this,
and we're very interested, but I've only seen you. There
should be hundreds of people wanting to talk to me, I'm
historically important remember.

GRACE I'm your closest relative and carer, of course I'm the one to
look after you and if you give it time you'll –

FREYA There's something going on.

GRACE ...

FREYA Please. Mum. Don't lie to me.

 GRACE *looks at her.*

 I always knew when something was wrong.

GRACE Have you got a headache?

FREYA How did you know?

GRACE Sit down, with me, on the bed, and I'll explain.

 JASMINE *is in the waiting room.*

 ROBERT *enters.*

JASMINE Er. This is a private room?

ROBERT Really?

JASMINE We've paid for it.

ROBERT I'm sure you have.

JASMINE Family only yeah?

She looks at him properly.

 Oh. Shit. Shit.

 Shit, didn't recognise you. Jesus. Seen pictures but they must
be from a while back. You look... old. Shame we haven't
met before something like this, isn't it?

ROBERT You look... really –

JASMINE What? Here you go, they said you like to answer back, okay
yeah, I've been up all night, I'm not my best. What? I look
like what?

ROBERT Like your mother.

JASMINE Do I?

ROBERT When she was your age.
She's floored.

JASMINE Yeah right well done. Good tactic. I look like my mum, put
me off my – That must freak you out then. Sarah says Mum
was never happy, often crying she said, looks like Freya got
those genes.

ROBERT Look, I know there's a lot to talk / about but –

JASMINE And I got yours, apparently I've got a mouth on me reminds
Sarah of you, yeah there's a fuck of a lot to talk about where
do you want to start?

ROBERT This isn't the time.

JASMINE Never is, is it? Never is the fucking time by the sound of it.

ROBERT Jasmine –

JASMINE Such a lonely old fucking – look at you –

ROBERT You're not a teenager so –

JASMINE Actually I am.

ROBERT Can you stop –

JASMINE Technically I am? Nineteen, if you're counting, which
you're probably not, so – stop what?

ROBERT Stop being so fucking petulant.

JASMINE Christ they said you got nasty quickly I thought they meant
hours not minutes look at you, big red face.

ROBERT Sit down.

JASMINE I'm not the one getting angry Gandalf, you're shouting, I don't think you're allowed to do that I might call security.

ROBERT I hate planes. I'm shattered. Fine. You're nineteen. I'm seventy. Sit down, and shut up. What are you wearing?

JASMINE Whatever the fuck I want.

ROBERT You look like prostitute.

JASMINE You talk like this to everyone?

ROBERT Yes. You?

JASMINE Yes.

A moment of respect.

ROBERT Good.

He sits.

She reluctantly sits as well.

JASMINE Read your books.

ROBERT And?

JASMINE Bit dry.

He smiles.

You told her to get rid of it.

ROBERT I told her the truth yes.

JASMINE Probably regret that now.

A moment.

ROBERT I could do with a drink.

JASMINE takes a bottle out of her bag. Gives it to ROBERT.

What's this?

JASMINE Ouzo.

ROBERT Oh.

He drinks from the bottle. It's awful.

You want some?

She takes the bottle. Drinks. They continue to share it.

ROBERT I should've put my work first, from the beginning.
That's what I regret.

JASMINE Even though Freya's nearly dead.
Sarah's a fuck-up, getting divorced.
And me... well... look.
Even given all that?

ROBERT Because of all that exactly.
I should never have had any of you in the first place.

JASMINE So why have you come now?

ROBERT To say goodbye.

JASMINE She's not –

ROBERT Yes. From what I understand she doesn't have much of a chance.

JASMINE No fuck off you don't know if anything had happened Steve would've told us, you don't know shit. Fuck's sake. Thought you'd have big eyes actually. We've all got big eyes.
Suppose it must've been Mum.

ROBERT Yes.

JASMINE Right.

ROBERT But she had your hair. Your hands.

JASMINE What else?

ROBERT ...

JASMINE What's in the bag?

ROBERT One of your mother's dresses. Freya liked it, wanted it, years ago. I wouldn't let her. I thought maybe I could...

JASMINE Bit fucking late now.

ROBERT You're not like the other two.

JASMINE No. You would've liked me.

ROBERT Yes.

I think I would.

SARAH *enters.*

SARAH You're here.

ROBERT I am.

SARAH You've met.

ROBERT We have.

JASMINE Where's Colin?

SARAH Colin's gone.

As the next scene continues, SARAH sits with them and drinks the ouzo.

2525.

GRACE When you fell in the river, Freya, you hit your head. You did some damage. And sometimes, when that happens, people become unable to see a distinction between their own particles and those around them. They can't see the edges of their body any more – where they stop and the world begins. They can instead understand instinctively that we are all just different recycled pieces of a larger, older creature. We are simply earthquakes ourselves, wonderful irregularities in an evolving system. We die and the Earth uses us for something new.

YOUNG ROBERT *enters, dressed in white, and wheels in a cot.*

Yes Freya, this is the future, and I am your mother. But this is also the past and the present, and I am your father, your sisters, your friends, your husband, the table, the bed, the

ground, we are everyone that is, was, and everything that will be. I'm nature all in one. So are you.

FREYA This isn't real.

GRACE Your brain is doing what it always does. Making sense of what it receives. Combining imagination, memory, information.

FREYA I'm dreaming.

GRACE You're on your way.

FREYA Where?

GRACE We're here to help you.

YOUNG ROBERT Freya. Look.

The sound of a baby crying. FREYA goes and looks in the cot. She picks up the baby.

FREYA Emily.

DR HARRIS *is with STEVE, who sits on the bed.*

DR HARRIS I'm sorry. Her condition is worsening.

STEVE I...

STEVE doesn't know how to react.

DR HARRIS It's a matter of when to say goodbye. It should be soon.

STEVE Alright. Yes.

DR HARRIS Alright then.

And what about the family? I know they're outside.

STEVE ...

DR HARRIS Will they want to be here? STEVE

DR HARRIS Or would you rather it was just you?

STEVE Let them in.

The family goes through.

*The NURSE sits in a chair, exhausted. Turns on the radio.
Music plays. A hymn.*

2525.

The worlds beginning to merge.

FREYA frantic.

FREYA Wake me up... please.

GRACE No.

FREYA Please. I need to go back. I can't stay here. Emily's alive. I can hear her. She's calling for me.

GRACE Freya. You can't.

FREYA I made a mistake. I need to go back.

Tell them all. Give the speech. Walk the Earth.

GRACE No.

FREYA You can't stop me. This isn't real. I need to wake up and tell them what's going to happen, or the world doesn't change.
The world stays as it is!

Darling!

She puts EMILY back in the cot.

I'm going to be with you. I'm going to wake up.

FREYA goes to the bed, lies down and shuts her eyes.

GRACE Freya. I'm sorry.

FREYA Now!

Yes!

Now!

GRACE It's over.

The music continues, the worlds blurring. The family gathered around the bed, GRACE stood slightly apart.

We can't hear what's happening – the music plays.

DR HARRIS stands close by. STEVE sits on the bed with FREYA, holding EMILY.

One by one the family say goodbye. ROBERT stands back and watches.

STEVE gives EMILY to SARAH, and then lifts FREYA and hugs her. Crying.

Some distance away... during this, EMILY enters, sixteen, very different to how we saw her before. Bright, optimistic, intelligent.

She wears the floral dress worn by GRACE in the Part One Prologue. And she carries a backpack.

Epilogue

The kitchen of a large house in the west Oxfordshire countryside. Night. On the table there is food out.

It is sixteen years later.

EMILY is packing food into a backpack.

Some of it doesn't fit. In the rearranging, we see a map, a torch. A knock on the door.

EMILY goes and opens it.

TOM enters, now thirty-five, a man, rather than a boy. He is dressed much better, ready for a long walk. He is sure of himself.

EMILY Shhh – / Dad's asleep – you look nervous.

TOM You've barely left the town on your own before, you don't know what it's like.

EMILY I've done my research.

TOM You should let me come with you.

She smiles. Touches his arm.

EMILY I'll be fine.

TOM And what are you wearing?

EMILY Do you like it? Before she died, Mum told Dad it was her favourite dress. Dad gave it to me this afternoon, for my birthday. I like the pattern. How about you? Did you get me a present?

TOM *gives her a small bag.*

TOM Papers, ID, map, new phone.

EMILY Good.

TOM All in the bag, as ordered.

EMILY Perfect. I'm thinking maybe I should go barefoot...

TOM It's a long way.

EMILY It is, and people should notice.

She takes her shoes off.

Definitely barefoot.

TOM You'll call me if you get into trouble?

EMILY There won't be trouble.

TOM There might be, maybe we should tell your dad what you're doing. If he wakes up and you're gone –

EMILY When did you care what he thought?

TOM This is different.

EMILY I've told them for years, over and over, when I'm sixteen, this is what happens. At dawn, I'll be on my way. Not my fault if they never believed me.

TOM At least leave a note –

EMILY Right. Toothbrush, bag, towel.

She puts the backpack on.

TOM Speech?

EMILY Don't need a speech. It's all up here... Tom! I'm half your age and you look petrified.

TOM It's ridiculous.

EMILY You know what I can do?

TOM Yes.

EMILY And you trust me?

TOM Of course.

EMILY Then smile. It'll be fine. Now, how do I look?

He looks at her, takes her in.

TOM Emily Sullivan.

 Magnificent.

She smiles. He smiles too.

She looks at him, goes to the kitchen blackboard, and writes, in large letters:

 'Gone to London'

As she goes on her way, STEVE finally lets go of FREYA, and she dies.

Blackout.

End of Play.

LOVE, LOVE, LOVE

Love, Love, Love was first performed at the Drum Theatre, Plymouth, on 12 October 2010, as a co-production between Paines Plough and Theatre Royal Plymouth, before touring. The cast was as follows:

KENNETH	John Heffernan
HENRY	Simon Darwen
SANDRA	Daniela Denby-Ashe
ROSE	Rosie Wyatt
JAMIE	James Barrett
<i>Director</i>	James Grieve
<i>Designer</i>	Lucy Osborne
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	Hartley T A Kemp
<i>Sound Designer</i>	Tom Gibbons

The play was revived at the Royal Court Theatre Downstairs, London, on 27 April 2012. The cast was as follows:

KENNETH	Ben Miles
HENRY	Sam Troughton
SANDRA	Victoria Hamilton
ROSE	Claire Foy
JAMIE	George Rainsford
<i>Director</i>	James Grieve
<i>Designer</i>	Lucy Osborne
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	James Farncombe
<i>Sound Designer</i>	Tom Gibbons

This version of *Love, Love, Love* was first performed by Roundabout Theatre Company at the Laura Pels Theatre at the Harold and Miriam Steinberg Center for Theatre, New York City, on 22 September 2016, directed by Michael Mayer.

It received its British premiere at the Lyric Hammersmith, London, on 5 March 2020, directed by Rachel O’Riordan.

Characters

KENNETH

HENRY

SANDRA

JAMIE

ROSE

Note on the Text

The play should take place in a proscenium arch theatre. A red curtain should close between scenes.

(/) means the next speech begins at that point. (–) means the next line interrupts.

(...) at the end of a speech means it trails off. On its own it indicates a pressure, expectation or desire to speak.

A line with no full stop at the end indicates that the next speech follows on immediately.

A speech with no written dialogue indicates a character deliberately remaining silent.

ACT ONE

Curtain up.

The sound of the Vienna Boys' Choir singing.

25 June 1967. A north London flat. It's a mess. Smoky. Unwashed glasses on table.

KENNETH has the television on. He walks around wearing tweed trousers and a dressing gown. He comes out of the kitchen with a glass of brandy, puts it down on the side. Then moves back, runs and athletically jumps over the back of the sofa into the seat.

He lights a cigarette. Watches the television. Relaxes.

Realises he's left his brandy on the side. Tries to reach it from the sofa.

Really tries.

Gives up, gets up, gets the brandy and sits back down. The door opens.

HENRY enters. His hair is neat – he wears a black leather jacket.

KENNETH You're late.

HENRY So?

KENNETH You're missing the programme.

HENRY takes off his jacket. Underneath he wears a black cardigan, shirt and tie.

HENRY What programme?

KENNETH Look.

HENRY does, for a moment.

Twenty-six countries are broadcasting this, right now. Across the world.

Thought you were interested.

HENRY Things to do, haven't I?

KENNETH You said you'd be back for it.

HENRY I've been working all day. I have to pay rent. Don't get a free ride.

KENNETH A free ride.

HENRY Not like some people.

KENNETH You could go to university if you wanted.

HENRY Bit old for that now.

KENNETH No. You're not –

HENRY Doesn't matter doesn't matter.

KENNETH You're not too old you can get a grant, a scholarship you know.

HENRY Doesn't matter.

KENNETH You might get one. Even you.

HENRY Shut it.

He sits in an armchair. They watch for a moment.

KENNETH This has never happened before in the history of mankind. Across the world four hundred million people, including us, are all watching this one thing at exactly the same time.

They keep watching. After a moment –

HENRY What's on the other side?

KENNETH Henry, this isn't beyond you, this isn't a clever thing, this is for everyone, every single person across the world, you've got to understand the significance. It's America, Europe, Japan. It's twenty-six different countries, cultures and languages coming together. It's remarkable. It signifies a new age of international cooperation.

HENRY What are they showing then?

KENNETH The Beatles.

HENRY That's not The Beatles.

KENNETH Later on it will be.

HENRY Who's that?

KENNETH The Vienna Boys' Choir.

HENRY The Vienna Boys' Choir?

KENNETH Yeah.

HENRY Bloody hell.

KENNETH I know, but if you –

HENRY Turn to the other side.

KENNETH They illustrate the point, exactly what I'm saying, Austria chose a choir, Britain chose *The Beatles*. Out of everyone and anything in the whole country.

HENRY *takes one of KENNETH's cigarettes.*

It could've been politicians or old men, an orchestra or ballet or something old like that something old but it wasn't. It was pop music. Young people, like us dressed up as they want. Things are changing every day at the moment.

HENRY *lights a cigarette.*

HENRY You been out at all?

KENNETH Once or twice...

HENRY Right.

KENNETH I got your beans.

HENRY What?

KENNETH Your beans. HENRY

KENNETH You said we needed beans.

HENRY What about bog paper?

KENNETH Do we need...

HENRY Well there isn't any.

KENNETH Really?

HENRY Is there?

KENNETH I don't know.

HENRY Did you see any?

KENNETH No but

HENRY Well then.

KENNETH Thought you might have it hidden away.

HENRY Why would I –

KENNETH Or something.

HENRY Hidden it?

KENNETH Or something. Yeah.

Beat.

HENRY What about butter, milk? You get any of that?

KENNETH Thought it was just the beans you needed.

HENRY Just the beans...

KENNETH Yeah just the beans. That's all you said to get, so that's what I got, following orders Henry, just following orders.

HENRY Perhaps you should go home. Maybe your time in my flat is coming to an end, I think you should pack up actually.

KENNETH You're tired I can tell.

HENRY Yeah that's right Ken I am tired. Fucking knackered as it happens.

KENNETH *goes and pours him a brandy.*

Dad called me today.

KENNETH At work?

HENRY At work. On the telephone yes. Don't talk to him much like that. He speaks all properly, accentuates his vowels, like the Queen or something.

KENNETH He thinks people listen.

HENRY People?

KENNETH Listen in. The government.

HENRY Really?

KENNETH What he said.

HENRY He's a mad old man sometimes.

KENNETH Something to do with the war I reckon.

HENRY Mad old bastard.

A moment.

KENNETH What did he want?

HENRY He said 'We were under the impression Kenneth was at Oxford over the summer.' Oh right, I said.

 'But when we tried to contact him it turns out he left at the end of term, got a lift somewhere, not a word from him... and then we receive this letter'

KENNETH They got it then.

HENRY Mum thinks you've been kidnapped.

KENNETH I said I was alright, that's the only reason I bothered, to reassure her –

HENRY She thinks they held you at gunpoint, forced you to write it.

KENNETH They're insane, both of them.

HENRY You should call.

KENNETH No.

HENRY You will. I have to put up with it otherwise. Telephone.

KENNETH Hassle though.

HENRY Or go home, that's your other option Kenneth, you could just go back home.

KENNETH No. It's always the same, when I'm away they moan, they say they miss me, but soon as I arrive, they ignore me.

HENRY They thought I might know something about your disappearance.

KENNETH And you said?

HENRY I said you don't tell me anything.

KENNETH Right.

HENRY Hadn't heard from you in ages.

KENNETH Thanks. You're a brother, a real brother to me.

HENRY I also said I thought you were a layabout little sod, an ungrateful little runt, that you should give them some of that grant you've got, give it back to them both.

KENNETH Is that what you think?

HENRY You're making as much as Dad and he works like a dog.

KENNETH I'm the future of this country,

HENRY My bloody taxes.

KENNETH It's an investment.

Beat.

I appreciate you taking me in, Henry.

I needed to get away.

You know, break out for a bit, like.

The thought of spending all those weeks stuck in that house middle of nowhere, with Mum and Dad, can't drink, can't smoke, nowhere to go, nothing, absolutely nothing to do, it's like...

Like a prison sentence or something.

HENRY You could get a job.

KENNETH We're not supposed to get a job, supposed to concentrate on our studies. I don't need a job anyway got my grant so –

HENRY That's right you don't need a job you've got your *grant*.
What about your friends, your lot from school, they're still around, must be.

KENNETH They're just as bad, they're small, nothing. I needed somewhere exciting. I'm not being arrogant, but you understand, you moved away.

HENRY Yeah well...

KENNETH You came to where things are happening. You don't just hear about things in London, or read them in the papers, you see them, you're on the spot. It's the Post Office Tower, the river, The Stones, The Beatles – exhibitions, fashion, the cars, the *birds*.

HENRY The birds are something yes.

KENNETH Even bloody Harold Wilson. Saw him the other day. He's smaller than you'd think.

HENRY *gets up and switches the TV off.*
Oi. I was watching that.

HENRY No you weren't.

KENNETH It's important.

HENRY It's a *choir*.
Beat.
So what you doing tonight? Out somewhere?
Off out I presume?

KENNETH No.

HENRY You're not?

KENNETH Thought I'd watch television actually.

HENRY Said you wanted excitement. You could watch television at home.

KENNETH No.

HENRY Why not?

KENNETH Mum and Dad don't have one.

HENRY Yes they do, in the corner.

KENNETH It blew up during the football.

HENRY What?

KENNETH The World Cup. Didn't you notice?

HENRY Haven't been home for a while.

KENNETH After that they said it was a waste of time and money getting another, said they'd rather listen to the radio.

Pause.

HENRY Plenty of skirt out there.

KENNETH Yeah.

HENRY Plenty of birds.

KENNETH Right.

HENRY Haven't you got a chum or something, someone you could meet?

KENNETH You want me out.

HENRY Well not to put too fine a point on it.

KENNETH What's her name?

HENRY None of your business actually though is it Kenneth?

Pause.

KENNETH I'm settled now.

HENRY You're *settled*.

KENNETH Got my brandy and fags, my house coat.

HENRY Is that what it is?

KENNETH Yeah.

HENRY Thought you were ill or something.

KENNETH Bloke at Oxford gave it to me.

HENRY A present?

KENNETH Yeah.

HENRY Poof is he?

KENNETH What?

HENRY Was he a poof?

KENNETH Don't think so.

HENRY Are you?

KENNETH What?

HENRY A bender.

KENNETH Hard to say isn't it?

HENRY Is it?

KENNETH What?

HENRY Are you a poof?

KENNETH No.

HENRY You look like one.

KENNETH Do I?

HENRY In that. Look like a proper queer.

KENNETH Nothing wrong with being queer.

HENRY You are then.

KENNETH No, but there's nothing wrong with it.

HENRY Fucking Oxford, look at you.

KENNETH Henry.

HENRY

KENNETH Nothing like this has ever happened before. The laws are constantly being overthrown, the boundaries of what's possible, the music's exploding, the walls collapsing. That's what's going on. That's what's changing. We travel, do what we want, wear what we like. Enjoy it. Experiment.
We're breaking free.

HENRY Well you can break free right now and bugger off she'll be here in a minute.

KENNETH No.

HENRY Yes.

KENNETH I don't have any money.

HENRY ...

Beat.

KENNETH I won't be in the way.

HENRY You will be in the way.

KENNETH She could bring a friend.

HENRY I don't reckon she could actually Kenneth.

KENNETH Make up a four.

HENRY No.

KENNETH Never done that have we, brothers with birds, the McLarens used to walk down the street, you remember, down the street, they used to wear jackets, looked the same, like just the two of them, there's strength in brothers, we've never done that. Do you remember the McLarens? Birds used to lap that up the two of them next to each other, birds used to love it.

I heard a story once about them, they were in this club, one of those places they used to go to, and this bunch of totty comes up to them and says we're going to make your day

and they went back to their house and all the girls lined up, and the McLarens picked teams like football teams, till there were like five-a-side, then they took their side up to their room, and... well I don't know what they did. All that she said – Frank Jameson's sister Tracey, she was one of the girls – all she said was she had a great time.

A great time.

Do you ever feel you're missing out Henry?

Not saying we'd do that, but it makes you think we might be missing a trick.

HENRY *has taken some money out of his wallet – offers it to KENNETH.*

What?

HENRY Here's a few bob, now fuck off.

KENNETH No come on.

HENRY Bit deaf tonight Kenneth are you?

KENNETH What's her name?

HENRY *slaps KENNETH round the head, not hard, but enough. Then puts the money in KENNETH's hand.*

She has got a name?

HENRY Course she's got a name.

KENNETH What?

HENRY You remember the fights we had?

KENNETH What is it?

HENRY You remember the fights?

KENNETH Course I do.

He keeps his distance.

You always won I know that, I don't want to fight you I just want to know her name, won't make any difference, will it,

you telling me, just saying what she's called, will it? Will it?

HENRY Sandra.

KENNETH Good name. Sandra.

HENRY Yeah.

KENNETH You and her been doing it long then?

HENRY We're not doing it.

KENNETH Oh right not doing it.

HENRY Not yet, not so far. First time she's come round. Big moment you see? So I don't want some spotty bastard cluttering up the place, wearing his queer fucking coat of many colours.

You understand. So.

Piss. Off.

Beat.

KENNETH You're going to let her see it like this?

HENRY What?

KENNETH The flat.

HENRY It's alright.

KENNETH You let her see it like this, she'll run a mile turn right round off she'll go.

HENRY

KENNETH

HENRY It was alright before you arrived.

KENNETH Come on. I'll help.

I'll help you tidy.

HENRY *doesn't move.*

Come on.

I will, I'll help, then I'll go. Promise.

They tidy.

HENRY's *efficient at it. KENNETH is slapdash.*

Is she pretty?

HENRY Yeah.

Beat.

Beautiful.

They tidy.

KENNETH Clever?

HENRY Yeah.

KENNETH Legs?

HENRY Up to here.

KENNETH Up to where?

HENRY Where do you think?

KENNETH Nice figure then.

HENRY She's a piece of work all round, I'm telling you.

KENNETH Classy?

HENRY Bit posh yeah.

KENNETH Yeah.

HENRY Middle class, you know, dresses up nice, every time I've seen her she's nice-looking. Makes an effort, hair, and the face. You know. She's into all that anti-nuclear wotnot, and women. Talks a lot about women. She goes to groups.

Protests.

KENNETH Where?

HENRY University I think.

KENNETH She's a student.

HENRY Yeah. She's political. All that.

KENNETH Thought you didn't like political women.

HENRY I don't.

KENNETH Right.

HENRY But you should see her knockers.

KENNETH Henry –

HENRY Bloody marvellous. Size of footballs. More than makes up for the political nonsense she comes out with.

KENNETH You said that to her?

HENRY Might've mentioned it yeah.

KENNETH What did she say?

HENRY That I was a chauvinist.

KENNETH Bit unfair.

HENRY I know. I told her, I'm not driving anyone around, they can drive themselves.

KENNETH That's not what chauvinist means.

HENRY Bloody hell Kenneth you really think I'm a fucking thick bastard don't you?

Beat.

I know what it means.

Maybe I didn't go to Oxford University, but I'm not a bloody – no no don't leave those there.

HENRY takes some dishes KENNETH has put in a cupboard and takes them through to the kitchen.

KENNETH What time's she getting here?

HENRY Nine o'clock. What time is it now?

KENNETH Ten to.

HENRY You going to bugger off then?

KENNETH Yeah, I'll finish this, then go off to my room.

HENRY Your room?

KENNETH Leave you to it.

HENRY You're not going in your room, you're going out.

KENNETH Got books to read I'll be fine.

HENRY You're going to stay in there all night?

KENNETH They're long books lots of words you know me I'll be fine.
Beat.

HENRY Alright. But you better stay shut up in there. I'm telling you.

KENNETH I will.

HENRY Even if you want a piss. You do it out the window or something. In a bucket. Whatever. You stay put.

KENNETH Alright.

HENRY Understand?

KENNETH Yeah.
They tidy.
Do you talk to him much then?

HENRY Who?

KENNETH Dad.

HENRY He writes mostly.

KENNETH What does he say?

HENRY What?

KENNETH When he writes.

HENRY Him and Mum do a side each every other week. They check I'm alright. Get worried you know. He says how's things at work, I know what he means, he means am I making money. I write back and just say yeah Dad, yeah – everything rosy. Everything's peachy as a picture, don't you worry.

KENNETH Says that to me too. 'All well and good you going on about Oxford, make sure you get yourself a job.' Wants me to go into the civil service when I graduate. I just laugh. That's as high as his imagination can reach.

That's the pinnacle of ambition. Civil bloody service.

HENRY Mum as well, every letter, how are things Henry? Any girls take your fancy yet? She thinks it's all tea parties and formal dancing. 'Take my fancy.' Bloody hell. If she knew.

KENNETH Worried you're queer, probably.

HENRY Watch it.

KENNETH

HENRY Nah. She doesn't even know what that is.

Pause.

KENNETH What about this one tonight then?

HENRY Hard to tell. Bit mouthy. Wait and see.

KENNETH How did you meet?

HENRY I was putting up a poster on the billboard, and I look down and there she is, staring up at me. I'm like 'Hello love.' She says I've been watching you. Big eyes. Says it you know – suggestively. 'I've been *watching* you.' I went a bit giddy if I'm honest. And she goes on, keeps on talking telling me about herself, turns out she works in this boutique, she's been watching all morning. She says she liked my shoes. I said they stop me falling off the ladder. We have a drink at the end of the day, met up a few times since then, you know, drink, pictures, the preamble, and eventually last time I say why don't you come round mine, we'll have dinner.

KENNETH You haven't got anything in.

HENRY I know, I'm aware of that. I wasn't thinking of the practicalities at that moment was I? But as a matter of fact she was, she says, 'You any good at cooking then?' I said

‘As you mention it I don’t know one end of a kitchen from the other but I’ll have a go, I’ll cook whatever you want, if you’ll come over.’ She liked that, and said it was alright, she’d bring the food and cook, if I got the drink.

KENNETH Perfect lady.

HENRY Exactly.

KENNETH Looks better doesn’t it?

HENRY Suppose it does yeah.

Beat.

KENNETH A civil servant. Bloody hell. He doesn’t have a clue.

HENRY What then?

KENNETH A writer.

HENRY What sort?

KENNETH A travel writer. I’m going to have a flat on the King’s Road, full of ornaments, and carpets, collected from different countries and beautiful women, actresses, designers they’ll all come over to visit.

HENRY Believe it when I see it Kenneth.

KENNETH At Oxford they talk like this all the time, saying what they’re going to do and how they’re going to go about it, they tell you, I’m going to be a doctor, prime minister, I’m an *artist*, all these clever bastards, when they say things like that, it doesn’t sound stupid at all because you know, you look at them and you think yes, yes, they probably will be what they want to be.

HENRY Rich most of them.

KENNETH You’ve just got to want it enough.

The doorbell goes.

HENRY Right then.

KENNETH What?

HENRY Off you go.

KENNETH What?

HENRY In there.

KENNETH Hang on.

HENRY That's what you said.

KENNETH I can't not *meet* her.

HENRY I think you can.

KENNETH It'll be rude if I don't even say hello.

HENRY No.

KENNETH I'll meet her and then bugger off. Promise. Say I've got all this work to do.

HENRY ...

KENNETH ...

HENRY You better put something on then.

KENNETH I'm sure she won't mind.

HENRY She might not but I do. Scrawny little ferret running round the place.

The doorbell goes again.

 At least do it up.

 KENNETH *does.*

 HENRY *goes.*

 KENNETH *undoes the dressing gown and checks himself in the mirror.*

Comes back and lights a cigarette.

Pours himself a drink. Looks relaxed.

 HENRY *enters with SANDRA.*

KENNETH Hello.

SANDRA Hello.

HENRY This is my brother Kenneth.

KENNETH Ken.

SANDRA Hi Ken.

HENRY This is Sandra.

SANDRA How old are you?

KENNETH What?

SANDRA How old are you? What's your age?

KENNETH Nineteen. How old are you?

SANDRA Nineteen.

KENNETH Coincidence.

Beat.

SANDRA Can I have one of those?

KENNETH Course you can.

He gives her a cigarette.

HENRY Take your coat?

SANDRA Thank you.

HENRY takes her coat. KENNETH lights her cigarette.

Why aren't you dressed?

KENNETH Don't need to be.

SANDRA You've been like that all day?

KENNETH Yeah.

SANDRA Interesting.

HENRY He's a layabout.

SANDRA I like this.

KENNETH Do you?

SANDRA Yes. It's very decadent. I like things that are decadent.
Don't I Henry?

HENRY Yeah right.

SANDRA Henry's decadent.

KENNETH Is he?

SANDRA He wears a leather jacket like Joe Orton. It's splendid.
You must be a very decadent family.

HENRY Who's Joe Orton?

SANDRA Or maybe not.

KENNETH He's a writer.

SANDRA Correct.

KENNETH Our family's quite boring as it goes.

SANDRA All families are boring. That's why London was invented. So
you can move away.

KENNETH Yeah.

SANDRA Unless you're born in London. Then you're really in trouble.

KENNETH Where are you from?

SANDRA Saffron Walden.

KENNETH Where's that?

SANDRA It's a tiny little village in Essex, relatively pretty I suppose
but the people are animals. Inbred most of them I think,
couldn't wait to get out.

KENNETH I know what you mean.

SANDRA Do you?

KENNETH I like your dress.

SANDRA Do you live here?

KENNETH I'm staying for a while.

SANDRA I see how lovely but normally, normally Kenneth, where are you based normally?

KENNETH Based?

SANDRA Your *abode*.

KENNETH I'm a student.

SANDRA Henry you're very quiet. A student?

KENNETH Yes.

SANDRA Charming. Where?

KENNETH Oxford.

SANDRA How silly.

KENNETH What?

SANDRA Well I'm at Oxford too.

KENNETH Henry didn't say.

SANDRA Henry probably doesn't know, do you? Henry?

HENRY

SANDRA Did you know I was at Oxford University?

Beat.

HENRY No.

SANDRA You see? We don't know each other that well at all really. I only met him a few weeks ago.

HENRY Two months now.

SANDRA Is it?

HENRY Yes.

SANDRA Well we've been having such fun, I must've lost track. When we met, I was working in my summer job. He was up a ladder doing his thing with the posters. I was working in a shop on Baker Street, Apples and Oranges, do you know it?

KENNETH No.

SANDRA Delightful clothes. Wonderful colours. I simply adored it, but it's... well... it's turned into a complete disaster. Last week I got the sack.

KENNETH Did you?

SANDRA I've never had the sack before, well I've never even had a job before and I was outraged. All of a sudden they told me to leave.

KENNETH Why?

SANDRA I was smoking pot.

KENNETH None of their business.

SANDRA While serving a customer.

KENNETH Cool.

SANDRA That's what I thought, I thought that's in the spirit of the place, it's groovy, very now, they'll like it, but the customer complained didn't he, bloody bastard and they kicked me out on the street straight away. Don't know how I'm going to stay in London now with no job. Maybe I'll come here and live here with Henry. Would you like that Henry? Perhaps you'll still be hanging around Ken.

HENRY Kenneth do you need to –

KENNETH What?

HENRY ...

KENNETH Oh. Right.

HENRY How about a drink?

SANDRA Whisky and ginger please.

HENRY Alright then.

SANDRA Kenneth are you having a drink?

KENNETH No I... I'm going to go into my room actually. I've got some reading to get through. Great stack of books. I'll leave you and Henry to it.

SANDRA Reading?

KENNETH Yes.

SANDRA You're joking?

KENNETH Sorry.

SANDRA Well that's a shame. A real shame, Kenneth.

KENNETH Busy.

SANDRA Why not stay for a little bit before you go all boring like that? Before you closet yourself away. Come on. Let's get to know each other.

 KENNETH *considers.*

KENNETH You don't mind, Henry, do you?

 HENRY *looks at* KENNETH.

SANDRA Kenneth, one drink?

KENNETH Alright.

SANDRA Lovely.

 HENRY *gives her the drink and sits down, annoyed.*

 SANDRA *and* KENNETH *then sit together on the sofa.*

 I've got a confession to make actually. Can I tell you? I've been naughty.

KENNETH Have you?

SANDRA You're from Oxford I expect you'll understand.

KENNETH Go on.

SANDRA I'm completely gone.

KENNETH Gone?

SANDRA Stoned.

KENNETH Oh.

SANDRA Right this moment.

KENNETH Yes.

SANDRA Not drunk.

KENNETH No.

SANDRA Pot.

KENNETH Good.

SANDRA I smoke too much of it I think.

KENNETH I don't think that's possible.

SANDRA It's jolly isn't it?

KENNETH I like it yes. Yes it is jolly.

HENRY

SANDRA I smoked my last before I came out, now it's all gone.
And now we're all here and what are we going to do? Do you have any?

HENRY Did you bring dinner?

SANDRA What?

HENRY You were going to bring dinner, you were going to bring the ingredients and cook.

SANDRA It's your house.

HENRY We agreed.

SANDRA Well I'm sorry but I just assumed you would cook.

HENRY That's not what we said.

SANDRA

HENRY So we don't have anything in?

SANDRA Do you have any weed?

HENRY No.

SANDRA Then no we really don't have *anything* in then, Henry, not a thing. Very well done on this evening, nothing

to eat nothing to smoke, what a wonderful party.

HENRY

SANDRA Maybe you should get some fish and chips.

KENNETH I've got some.

SANDRA Fish and chips? Lovely.

KENNETH Some weed.

SANDRA Even better.

KENNETH In my room.

SANDRA Glorious.

HENRY You didn't tell me.

KENNETH You don't like it.

HENRY You should've told me.

KENNETH Why?

SANDRA Don't you go in for grass Henry?

HENRY

SANDRA ?

HENRY Not legal is it?

SANDRA Henry! You're so amusing. Isn't he? Not legal. The little policemen have got more important things to think about these days, than this, no one minds a bit of grass these days, it's like tea, it's like water, it's like fresh air these days, no one minds it at all. Go on Kenneth. Why don't you get yourself up and go and fetch it?

KENNETH Right you are.

He gets up and goes next door. A moment.

SANDRA looks at HENRY.

SANDRA I don't like your hair.

HENRY It's always like this.

SANDRA I know.

Another moment.

KENNETH *comes back, sits down next to SANDRA and starts to roll. Pause.*

HENRY You didn't tell me you'd lost your job.

SANDRA No.

HENRY Why not?

SANDRA We're not married Henry.

HENRY Didn't say we were but –

SANDRA Not even close. Don't want to get married. Probably never will. There's no loyalty to you Henry, I never promised anything.

HENRY So you say.

SANDRA So I do say that's right I say, I propose quite the opposite of marriage, I think you're very attractive and very nice, and all that but I don't feel the need to make any kind of commitment, especially one that restricts the woman in the arrangement. I'm not ready to obey anyone. I mean really, I'm not twenty yet, neither's Kenneth, how old are you?

HENRY Twenty-three.

SANDRA Yes, well that's a bit older but we're not our parents.

Things are different now. There's freedom.

KENNETH Something's changing.

SANDRA Something's changing yes, that's right, that's right Kenneth. You can feel it Henry, if you want to. Even you. You're part of it, even you, you moved to London, got your own place, did your own things. You didn't stay at home in the same town with your mum and dad, you're here and you're really living, aren't you? It's marvellous. What's the matter your face looks flat.

HENRY What?

SANDRA Don't you think?

HENRY What do you mean flat?

SANDRA All drooping, flat as a pancake, what's the matter?

Beat.

HENRY I'm over here on my own.

SANDRA Oh.

So you are.

I'm sorry.

She goes across and sits on the arm of his chair and hugs him. Kisses his head.

Have you been getting jealous?

You think I prefer your little brother, well he's nice I suppose but he's not a man is he? Not like you. He's a little boy.

HENRY He's got to read his books. Got to go to his room.

KENNETH What?

HENRY Haven't you?

KENNETH ...

HENRY

KENNETH ...Yeah.

SANDRA Henry?

You want him to stay in there all night.

HENRY Got his books.

SANDRA He can't stay in there all night.

Is he being simply gorgeous and getting out the way for us? Because I'm sorry but no, we can't do that. He's your guest, we can't evict him, turf him out, keep him all locked up in there, we can't do that.

HENRY Thought we'd want the place to ourselves.

SANDRA What if he needs the toilet?

KENNETH He said I should use a bucket.

SANDRA Henry.

HENRY Thought you'd want some privacy Sandra.

Thought that's what you'd be after.

Up to you though.

Do what you like.

SANDRA We could have a little party instead.

Couldn't we? The three of us. Two brothers. You two, and me.

Yes. We should have a party.

What do you think?

KENNETH Alright.

He lights the joint, and gets it going. Then gives it to

SANDRA.

She smokes it.

SANDRA I was out in the park all last night, with a group, a whole group of us, I think, the others I don't know what they did, but I drank wine until the early morning and then crawled under a tree and went to sleep. I slept until ten o'clock this morning. I was found by a policeman, by a little piggy, he said it's dangerous sweetheart you could've been raped, all by yourself in the park. I said the thing is *cuntstable*, the thing is you early morning irritating *cunt*... stable, I'm a woman, we could always be raped. At any moment, any minute of the day or night. If we lived our lives like that, trying to avoid it all the time, we wouldn't do anything. I looked at him, right in the face – I think he liked me – and I said, it's all about risk.

And then I turned and walked away. Went and had lunch, a joint, a bath and came here, but you know the thing – you two brothers – the thing was, I slept really well, just there, on the grass under the tree, I slept really well. I'm not sure about beds. I think we should sleep outside. I really think we should. Do you want some of this?

HENRY No.

She gives the spliff back to KENNETH. He smokes it.

SANDRA Do you like music?

KENNETH Yes.

SANDRA Henry doesn't.

HENRY I do.

SANDRA Classical music.

HENRY Nothing wrong with that.

SANDRA Not rock and roll.

HENRY Well –

SANDRA Do you like rock and roll Kenneth?

KENNETH I do yeah.

SANDRA What's your favourite rock and roll band?

HENRY He likes The Beatles.

SANDRA Is that right Kenneth? Do you like The Beatles?

KENNETH Cream.

SANDRA You like Cream?

KENNETH Yes.

SANDRA I like Cream.

KENNETH Good.

SANDRA Henry? Do you like Cream?

HENRY ...

SANDRA I don't mean the thing from cows.

HENRY Look, I'm rather tired of –

SANDRA What's your favourite song of theirs?

HENRY I don't know them very well that's true, I do prefer classical music, yes, but that's allowed.

SANDRA It's allowed of course it is, but I think rock and roll is better, don't you? Kenneth, don't you think rock and roll is simply a better sort of music?

KENNETH Yeah I do.

SANDRA Do you know why Henry? Do you know why I prefer it?

HENRY No.

SANDRA You can dance to it. I want to dance. Do you have any music we can dance to? I love dancing. It's form and chaos all at the same time. Freedom and restriction combined. Anarchy and fascism. I love it. Do you have any rock and roll at all? You probably only have Mozart, Beethoven... Tchaikovsky. You don't have anything new. Do you?

HENRY No.

SANDRA That's a shame I felt like dancing. I really felt like it tonight.

HENRY

KENNETH I've got some.

SANDRA Oh look, Kenneth has some records as well. He's coming up with everything tonight isn't he?

KENNETH Shall I get them?

SANDRA Why not?

KENNETH *goes.*

Beat.

Are you going to dance Henry?

HENRY No.

SANDRA Well why don't you go to the fish and chip shop then, because I'm getting hungry and you don't have any food I remember now because of the mix-up, so why don't you be a darling and go to the fish and chip shop and get us all fish and chips and while you're away, me and Kenneth, we'll have a bit of a dance.

HENRY A dance.

SANDRA Yes.

You know what dancing is.

HENRY is angry. Stands up, gets his coat.

KENNETH comes back in holding a small pile of records.

KENNETH Where are you going?

HENRY Fish and chips.

KENNETH Oh right. Good. You... Are you...?

HENRY Back in ten minutes.

He goes.

SANDRA Never seen him so red in the face.

KENNETH He gets angry sometimes.

SANDRA He takes it all so seriously.

KENNETH Nothing to worry about.

SANDRA He's old-fashioned.

KENNETH He likes you.

Beat.

SANDRA Are you old-fashioned Kenneth?

KENNETH No.

I get bored easily. I like new things.

I like things that are fresh.

SANDRA Fresh.

KENNETH *looks through the records.*

The world's going to be a different place in ten years, everything that's stopping us, what we're told to do, what we're told is the way to live, it'll all be different, you can feel it.

KENNETH Yeah.

SANDRA It's us, it's people like you and me Kenneth.

KENNETH I know.

SANDRA Young people, our age. We're the moment. Henry's just that bit too old he can't understand.

KENNETH He's always been old.

SANDRA I love being like this, I can feel the muscles in my body, I look in the mirror, there's not a wrinkle on my face, I wake up more vital.

KENNETH Fresh.

SANDRA Fresh yes. We don't need ties, we don't need jobs. We don't need these *structures*.

KENNETH Yeah.

SANDRA Or clothes. Looking like this, like we do, like you do under that look at you. You could walk around wearing nothing and you'd look better than most people when they're dressed up, you know that?

KENNETH Well you too. SANDRA

KENNETH I don't want to be rude but I imagine you look quite lovely under that.

They look at each other.

SANDRA My older sister, she's only five years older than me but she's falling apart. I know I'm not the most beautiful girl in the world, and it's not about looks it's about feeling, the feeling of now, I want to stay this age, in this summer, doing what I'm doing, for the rest of my life.

KENNETH You could be a model or something.

SANDRA A model.

KENNETH Yeah.

SANDRA A model what?

KENNETH In a magazine. Advertising holidays or perfume or something.

SANDRA A model woman you mean.

KENNETH Yeah.

SANDRA I wonder what you think that is?

KENNETH What?

SANDRA A model woman.

KENNETH He said you were a feminist.

SANDRA You and him ever shared?

KENNETH Shared?

SANDRA A woman.

KENNETH No.

SANDRA I don't mean shared.

KENNETH I know what you mean.

SANDRA I mean kissed.

KENNETH Kissed.

SANDRA Have you ever kissed the same woman.

KENNETH No.

SANDRA I like you Kenneth.

KENNETH I know, I know that I can tell but he'll be back.

SANDRA What do you mean?

Beat.

KENNETH He's my brother.

SANDRA I know he is.

But.

Well.

Here's what would happen. He'd be upset, in the moment, he'd be angry and leave, walk out the door, go to the pub, he'd call you a bastard want you to leave, to move out, but in a day or two, maybe even in a few hours, he'd get over it, think of it as a good thing that happened, because we're nothing me and him we're just passing through, he knows that really.

You're running your hand through your hair, I think you do that when you get nervous, when someone's putting you under pressure, but there's no pressure Kenneth. You can do what you like.

I like you.

And let's be clear, Kenneth.

You haven't stopped looking at me since I came through the door have you?

KENNETH No.

SANDRA Not since I came through the door.

KENNETH No.

SANDRA So we could just dance a little couldn't we? At least. Until he gets back.

KENNETH ...

SANDRA We're going to die.

KENNETH What?

SANDRA We're going, to die.

KENNETH Not now.

SANDRA Eventually, and the world is terrible, with Russia, and the bomb and Vietnam, and all we're asking for, people like you and me, all we're asking for, is some humanity, is some freedom, is to throw off everything that holds us down and explore what we could do instead. Maybe it doesn't have to be about power and guns and money, maybe it could just be about the fact that underneath, underneath our background and our countries and our clothes, like we said, we're all the same. That's all that people like you and me, that's all we're saying. We're going to die, and we shouldn't waste our lives. Don't you agree Kenneth?

KENNETH Yes I do.

SANDRA The summer's only just started.
We could go off together, see what happens. What do you think?

We could have adventures together you and me.

KENNETH Adventures?

SANDRA You chosen something to dance to then?

KENNETH looks at the records and smokes, then suddenly remembers, he smiles, looks at his watch, gives the joint to SANDRA, runs, jumps over the sofa again, and switches on the television.

We hear the opening of 'All You Need Is Love' by The Beatles.

SANDRA What's this?

KENNETH The Beatles.

SANDRA It doesn't seem like music you can dance to.

KENNETH I can dance to anything.

He takes her hand and they dance close and smoke as The Beatles play.

They kiss.

He holds her hand and they look at each other.

HENRY *comes in the door.*

HENRY They're shut.

He sees them. KENNETH backs off. HENRY looks at them.

SANDRA Henry. It's alright. It doesn't matter.

It's alright.

She goes towards him.

Touches him.

What's the problem?

She touches his face.

He looks at her.

He turns to KENNETH.

KENNETH I'm... we just... Sorry.

HENRY *goes back out the door and shuts it behind him.*

KENNETH's *upset, goes and turns down the television.*

Kneels by it.

SANDRA Tomorrow he'll come back and you'll sort it all out. You'll explain how it happened. That we're better suited, that it's not a one-night thing, that we're going to live together in Oxford next term.

KENNETH We –

SANDRA We could do that, couldn't we? And you'll tell him that we're going to travel around together this summer, and he'll listen and understand and within a month he'll look back on this moment as being one of the best things that's happened to him, especially when he's found a new girl to go out with, one that's really suited to him, a slightly duller traditional kind of girl. When he finds her, at that point, he'll be really pleased this happened.

Sometimes you have to do what feels right.

KENNETH Yeah I know.

SANDRA One day we'll laugh about this.

KENNETH Yes.

I mean...

I don't think he even liked you that much.

SANDRA Oh.

KENNETH I think you're lovely. All of you.

They move closer.

SANDRA The whole of the summer, we can do whatever we want. So.

Are you ready?

KENNETH For?

SANDRA Adventures.

Lights fade.

Curtain.

End of Act One.

TWO

'She Bangs the Drums' by The Stone Roses plays.

Evening. March 1990. The dining/living room of a medium-sized terraced house on the outskirts of Reading. Reasonably tidy. A large table in the middle. Family photos. A television is muted, but showing scenes of the television news, riots in London.

The music is playing out of a stereo on the side.

JAMIE, fourteen, enters, performing and singing. Really enjoying himself. He jumps on the table, sings and dances to a surprising amount of the song. He knows all the words and intonation – he's talented.

Suddenly there's a noise from off, a key in the door, as it opens.

KENNETH *(From off.) Jamie?!*

JAMIE is surprised, nearly falls off the table, knocks over some flowers, crashes into a bookshelf.

See it's still in one piece,

SANDRA *Alright*

KENNETH *Hasn't exploded, blown over, burnt down, he hasn't taken it apart piece by piece it's exactly as you left it.*

JAMIE tries to tidy up as KENNETH enters. He's now forty-two, wearing a jacket, shirt and trousers. He still looks youngish. He takes his coat off.

What are you up to?

JAMIE *Nothing.*

KENNETH *What's this?*

JAMIE *The Stone Roses.*

KENNETH listens for a second.

KENNETH He can't sing.

JAMIE Neither can you Dad.

KENNETH Watch it.

JAMIE Doesn't stop you trying.

KENNETH The ungrateful child.

JAMIE No.

KENNETH I give you all this. And you spit in my face.

JAMIE I don't understand.

KENNETH Switch it off.

He dumps his coat and goes out again.

JAMIE stops the tape. Ejects it.

(From off.) She could've been stuck there playing to no one,
 tears rolling down her face.

ROSE It's alright.

KENNETH She was trying to hide it but I could see, she was upset.

JAMIE puts the tape carefully back in the box. Sits on the
 arm of the sofa and listens.

KENNETH comes back in. He's followed by ROSE, sixteen,
 in school uniform, with her violin.

(About the television.) Turn that off too.

JAMIE There's a riot going on.

KENNETH Not tonight / there isn't,

ROSE Dad –

KENNETH She was upset!

JAMIE It's in London, there's horses and skinheads.

ROSE It doesn't matter.

JAMIE Do you pay poll tax / Dad?

KENNETH It's one day a year Sandra you know what I'm saying, she had a concert and it's nearly her birthday and it meant something to her.

ROSE *goes and sits in a chair.*

KENNETH *looks round. SANDRA's not there.*

KENNETH Where is she?

ROSE Kitchen.

KENNETH Thought she was following.

ROSE She said she had something to prepare.

KENNETH Oh.

He sits down.

Jamie you should've come, she was brilliant, like Jacqueline du Pré.

JAMIE Jacqueline du Pré's / a cellist.

KENNETH Solo and everything, little bit / she had to get right.

ROSE You know what he meant. (*To KENNETH.*) It wasn't / a solo.

KENNETH Everyone looking, everyone's asking, who's that girl with the cello?

ROSE / Violin

KENNETH She's amazing.

JAMIE Don't like classical / music.

KENNETH I was right there sweetheart, front row.

ROSE Yeah.

KENNETH Saved a seat for your mother, that was a waste of time.

JAMIE Can I go upstairs?

KENNETH No. We're doing a cake.

JAMIE Why?

ROSE A cake.

KENNETH Yes.

ROSE Mum said you were doing a surprise.

KENNETH Oh.

 Well.

 It's a cake.

JAMIE Why?

KENNETH It's nearly your sister's birthday.

JAMIE When?

KENNETH Midnight.

JAMIE How old is she?

KENNETH Come on Jamie.

JAMIE I don't know. How old?

KENNETH ...

JAMIE Dad

KENNETH Fifteen

ROSE Sixteen.

KENNETH I thought you were fifteen.

ROSE Doesn't matter.

Beat.

KENNETH What about your friends love? Were they there?

ROSE It's a weeknight.

KENNETH You getting on with them alright now?

ROSE Dad...

KENNETH What?

ROSE Can we not talk about this please?

KENNETH Why not?

ROSE It's private?

KENNETH It's only your brother.

JAMIE I won't tell anyone. What happened?

ROSE / Shut up.

KENNETH Your music teacher, what's his name?

ROSE Mr / Parsons.

KENNETH You know he went to Oxford?

ROSE Thought I saw you talking.

KENNETH He must've been there the same time as your mother and me, an organ scholar apparently, don't remember him but organ scholars were strange.

ROSE He is / strange.

KENNETH We didn't really move in the same / circles.

ROSE He smarms up to the parents, but in the classroom he's a total Hitler.

KENNETH One of those?

ROSE Yeah.

JAMIE He's alright with me.

ROSE Right.

JAMIE Yeah. I like him.

ROSE Do you.

JAMIE It's probably cos you're stupid he only likes clever people.

ROSE I really hate you.

Beat.

KENNETH Well if he gives you trouble, love, you let me know.

ROSE What? Are you going to beat him up?

KENNETH No I'll get him on the phone and have a word. The power of rhetoric, much forgotten.

ROSE I can't imagine you hitting anyone Dad.

KENNETH Definitely / not.

ROSE But isn't that what dads are supposed to do?

KENNETH What?

ROSE Look after their daughters.

JAMIE I can hit people. / I've got a really good punch.

KENNETH Rosie don't be stupid you're looked after you get everything you want.

ROSE / No.

KENNETH Where is she? Thought we were having cake.
He gets up and goes out.

ROSE *(To herself.)* He never *listens...*

JAMIE I hit someone last week.

ROSE Shut up.

JAMIE After Maths Club we were giving each other dead arms.

ROSE / 'Maths Club'.

JAMIE Paul nearly cried when I got him.

ROSE Can't believe you go to Maths Club.

JAMIE What?

ROSE Such a geek.

JAMIE I'll hit you.

ROSE You're too old to hit girls.

JAMIE It's different with sisters.

ROSE No it isn't. I'm a woman now. I can say what I want, and you can't do anything.

He looks at her.

JAMIE Daniel's brother said that last Saturday at some party he burst into a bedroom and found Sarah Franks doing something to Mark Edwards that involved his penis.

ROSE

JAMIE Isn't Mark Edwards supposed to be your boyfriend?

ROSE ...

JAMIE Thought so.

You see? Don't need to hit you. Happy birthday.

Cake makes you fat.

He goes out.

ROSE *sits there. Upset. Doesn't know what to do.*

A moment.

KENNETH *comes back in.*

KENNETH Wish I'd learnt an instrument. But we didn't have the facilities you do these days, and anyway, we all wanted to play guitar or drums, you've seen the photo.

Classical took a back seat. You've seen the photo?

ROSE Yeah.

KENNETH Where's your brother gone?

ROSE Said he didn't want any cake.

KENNETH Not the point.

ROSE Doesn't matter.

KENNETH Jamie come down here!

ROSE Dad –

KENNETH If you're not down in two minutes I'm sending your mother!
That'll work.

He winks at ROSE.

Your uncle likes classical. We should invite him one day to see you. But anyway it's all the same thing now though isn't it? McCartney used to say it, these *divisions* between genres well they're pointless, I mean actually what's the difference between Mozart and Procol Harum, essentially they're the same thing.

ROSE What's Procol Harum?

KENNETH What?

ROSE What's Procol Harum?

KENNETH Who not what.

ROSE They're a band then?

KENNETH *What's Procol Harum?*

ROSE Okay it doesn't / matter.

KENNETH This weekend, we're getting the records out Rosie.

ROSE Dad – really –

KENNETH You and me.

ROSE No.

KENNETH Yes. If you haven't heard of Procol Harum you haven't lived.

ROSE Just tell me

KENNETH Impossible.

ROSE Dad.

KENNETH No. You have to hear them. In for a treat.

ROSE ...

KENNETH Jamie! Now! We'll listen to it this weekend.

Something to look forward to.

ROSE I think there is a difference.

KENNETH What?

ROSE I think there is a difference between –

SANDRA *enters with a bottle of wine and a glass.*

SANDRA I am completely dry. My throat is like Ethiopia or somewhere. Absolutely desperate for a glass or two. What's the matter love you look like you've been hit by a car.

KENNETH Rose was talking love.

SANDRA Were you? Go on then. Wasn't interrupting. Go on. Speak.

ROSE I was just / saying about –

KENNETH Did you get me one of those?

SANDRA One of these?

KENNETH Yes.

SANDRA A *glass* you mean Kenneth?

KENNETH A glass yes.

SANDRA You want a glass.

KENNETH Unless you expect me to drink it from the bottle?

SANDRA I wouldn't mind.

KENNETH I'm sure you wouldn't but some of us have standards.

SANDRA You know where the kitchen is.

He gets up.

KENNETH You want one Rose?

SANDRA Brilliant parenting Kenneth.

KENNETH Celebration isn't it?

ROSE I'm fine.

SANDRA Perhaps she wants a fag too.

ROSE No thanks.

SANDRA Sarcasm love.

KENNETH She's fifteen.

ROSE Sixteen.

KENNETH Sixteen there you are. We were drinking at that age, we drank for England both of us / you've told me the things you did.

SANDRA Not with my parents, we drank secretly, and I bet she does that a lot, sure she's got places she goes –

ROSE No / actually

SANDRA She doesn't want to drink with us, we're *boring*.

KENNETH We are boring, that's true.

SANDRA We're like dinosaurs to her.

KENNETH Jamie! Last chance!

SANDRA You're like a mammoth Ken, and I'm... I'm one of those things.

KENNETH What things?

SANDRA One of those flying things.
She mimes, and makes the noise.

KENNETH Are you sure you don't want a glass love?

ROSE Yeah.

SANDRA What are they called?
She mimes and does the noise again.

KENNETH Shall I bring the cake in?

SANDRA Ken! No. Let's wait till midnight. / What's –

ROSE I'm tired.

SANDRA It'll be fun. You can stay up. See it in. You're only sixteen once.

ROSE Yeah but...

KENNETH Alright.
He goes.

A moment.

SANDRA What are they called those flying dinosaurs?

ROSE Pterodactyls.

SANDRA Terro-dactles. That's it! My daughter is a genius, she thinks and plays the violin, look at you. All dressed up.

ROSE It's uniform.

SANDRA Oh sweetheart, you're sulking, why are you sulking?

ROSE I'm not.

SANDRA Long face.

ROSE Just because I'm not getting drunk doesn't / mean I'm unhappy.

SANDRA I'm not drunk darling, I am / seriously not drunk.

ROSE But you keep on / interrupting and that is getting quite annoying.

SANDRA I am tired. I'll give you that, I am extremely exhausted from a long day... what?

ROSE Nothing.

Beat.

SANDRA You have to learn, that sometimes, sometimes in life, people are late.

ROSE I *know*. I've told you it doesn't matter. I'm / not bothered.

SANDRA But obviously it does, it's this huge rift between us tonight I mean I'd give you a hug but I'm not allowed to touch you any more now that you're a teenager. I know I know that you are not happy I can see it. I am *concerned*. But your father and me we work hard and sometimes these things can't be avoided.

You're not a kid any more are you?

You can understand what I'm saying.

Yes?

ROSE ...

SANDRA Are you seeing Mark / this weekend?

ROSE It was just before, when all the other parents were all there.
Before it began.

SANDRA Oh – no. We're still / on this.

ROSE It was embarrassing. All the other parents were there.
Dad only got there at the last minute, and you –

SANDRA I'm very busy Rose.

ROSE You're a modern mother a working woman / I know I know

SANDRA These other mums are probably at home all day, probably
don't work the hours I do.

ROSE I think they do actually. Most of them do work.

SANDRA I drove foot to floor, top speed, all the way there, broke the
law for you.

ROSE Thanks that's really / nice of you.

SANDRA And I got there for your bit. Didn't I?

ROSE

SANDRA Didn't I?

Rosie?

Did you see me?

ROSE No.

SANDRA I was at the back, standing at the back.

ROSE Didn't see you Mum.

SANDRA *looks at her.*

SANDRA What's the matter with you tonight? Your father's right, have
a glass.

SANDRA *offers her the glass.*

ROSE No.

SANDRA Come on love you need it. Long face like that.

ROSE What about you?

SANDRA Don't worry about me, I am of a generation where we improvise wildly.

ROSE takes the glass. SANDRA swigs from the bottle as KENNETH enters with a glass.

KENNETH That's the woman I fell in love with right there. / Look at that.

SANDRA You should keep it going.

ROSE What?

SANDRA The violin. What grade are you now?

ROSE You don't know?

SANDRA No I don't know that's why I'm / asking.

ROSE We went out?

KENNETH She's grade seven.

ROSE *Six.*

KENNETH Thought it was / seven.

ROSE I passed last month. Remember?

KENNETH I thought –

ROSE We went out for dinner.

KENNETH Oh right yes. You...

ROSE I got a distinction we went out / to celebrate.

KENNETH Thought that was seven.

ROSE No.

SANDRA Grade six that's really something. You could keep it going
Rosie – a professional musician. Touring the world.

ROSE Pays really bad –

SANDRA It's not about the money, it's the passion, the audiences. You
enjoy playing don't you? I can tell.

ROSE Can we just have the cake now?

SANDRA The look on your face when you get it right. Concentration.
A little smile. I saw you. It's important to do something you
love.

ROSE Yeah. Can we do the cake / though?

KENNETH We'll wait for midnight, it's what your mother / wants.

SANDRA It's not all about money.

KENNETH Do you remember that little orchestra at the Isle of Wight?

SANDRA I do.

KENNETH With a hangover it was / marvellous.

SANDRA I remember the journey home.

ROSE Can I / go upstairs then please?

SANDRA Trying to hitch. Hungover, tired, smelling of crap, your
father was irresponsible at that age love, please don't ever
copy his behaviour. We nearly ended up murdered – this
truck driver looking at my legs, your father encouraging him.

KENNETH We didn't have any money.

ROSE I've heard this story so many times.

KENNETH He needed paying. That was the deal.

SANDRA You were my pimp.

KENNETH It was different, you could do things / like that then.

SANDRA I suppose I did have very good legs.

KENNETH All art aspires to the quality of music sweetheart, you know who said that?

ROSE / Yes.

SANDRA You could do it at university.

KENNETH T. S. Eliot.

ROSE / Walter Pater

SANDRA A degree in music, you can do that at Oxford can't you?

KENNETH You can, we were saying, like your Mr –

SANDRA What?

KENNETH Her music teacher I was speaking to Mr –

SANDRA What are you talking about?

KENNETH He was an organ scholar at Oxford, Mr –

ROSE Parsons.

KENNETH Parsons right.

SANDRA Are you doing Music A level Rosie?

ROSE Oh. – fucking...

SANDRA Fucking. What fucking?

ROSE Just –

SANDRA Fucking, Ken, she's saying fucking.

KENNETH Yes I know.

SANDRA Love, why are you swearing you must be upset.

ROSE We talked about my A levels *last week*!

SANDRA Don't get offended Rosie. I've got a life of my own. I can't remember every detail. What did we say then? What did we decide? You're doing music then, yes?

Yes?

ROSE Yes.

SANDRA Good. Well then you can keep that going, get your degree then join an orchestra, tour the world, perfect, all sorted out, get Jamie down here I'm on a roll.

KENNETH Jamie!

ROSE I'm going upstairs

SANDRA Sweetheart no, we have a cake.
Beat.

ROSE I'll come down for midnight, alright?

SANDRA You don't enjoy our company.

ROSE I'm going to make a phone call.

SANDRA It's half-eleven, who are you calling at this time, it's too late, they'll be in bed.

ROSE We're not in bed.

SANDRA Who is it?

ROSE I don't have to tell you / who I'm calling.

SANDRA Have I offended you Rosie?

KENNETH It's alright love, off you go, we'll call you when it's / time.

SANDRA Did I bring you up like this? This look, this contempt?

KENNETH Leave her alone.

SANDRA Rejecting your parents it's an important part of growing up I understand that, teenage rebellion's important, but I have to say sweetheart tonight would not be the time, you don't seem grateful, your father and I we made a real effort.

ROSE You nearly missed the concert Mum. When you came in late, everyone *looked*.

SANDRA

ROSE

SANDRA I haven't told you this before but I'm not sure about Mark.

KENNETH Sandra –

SANDRA He's a nice boy I know but –

ROSE What?

KENNETH Sandra shut the mouth now / the mouth is doing things.

SANDRA He flirts with me, and I know he's a / teenager, the hormones but –

ROSE What are you talking about?

SANDRA He flirts with me in the kitchen.

ROSE No he doesn't.

SANDRA He does, when he's here, I mean I'm not bothered by it but you should probably know. It's understandable, boys like real women at that age, fully formed, you know, and there's plenty more fish for you, in the sea, that's all I'm saying. Don't get too attached.

ROSE Fuck's sake Mum you're a bitch.

KENNETH Can't argue with that love.

SANDRA I'm a *bitch*, I love this swearing, it's very sweet, isn't it Kenneth? She really is / growing up.

KENNETH It's alright Rosie off you go, your mother's / showing off

SANDRA Oh look at you, all little and upset and red – you're young is what I'm saying, and you're pretty, when you make the effort. You look so miserable. You should be having fun.

ROSE Like you had fun you mean.

SANDRA Well yes it's true we did have *fun* when we were your age we did.

ROSE Fucked around a lot did you?

SANDRA We certainly weren't hung up on sex no.

ROSE Now you think I'm *hung up on sex*.

SANDRA We didn't put all our eggs in one basket, it all seems so important for you, and you've got all these exams, I'm worried, you look depressed.

ROSE Not my fault about the exams.

SANDRA No but –

ROSE So what are you saying?

SANDRA ...

ROSE

SANDRA Fine. Don't listen to me. Do what you want. Make your mistakes and when you come running I'll be here to pick up the pieces, you've always got me darling, you'll always have me looking after you, that's what mothers do.

KENNETH Off you go love.

ROSE Don't shout yeah, while I'm on the phone.

SANDRA Don't be silly.

ROSE Cos you do sometimes and it's embarrassing.

She goes.

Pause.

SANDRA goes to a cupboard, takes out her cigarettes.

KENNETH watches her.

She lights a cigarette.

KENNETH You look tired.

SANDRA Thanks.

KENNETH That was a mess tonight.

SANDRA

KENNETH It's not fair.

SANDRA I've done the same for you Kenneth. Filled in for you.

KENNETH Not like this, I've never just forgotten entirely.

SANDRA It shouldn't have happened I know that.

KENNETH Right, and when she called from the payphone asking where you were I –

SANDRA You shouldn't have left Jamie by himself.

KENNETH He's fourteen.

SANDRA He's weird.

KENNETH He's bright.

SANDRA That's the problem.

KENNETH It was a couple of hours. I told him not to touch anything. I gave him a number to call if he needed to. I couldn't leave her there playing to no one, it obviously means a lot to her. And he wouldn't come with me of course.

SANDRA ...

KENNETH He could've gone next door in an emergency.

SANDRA Next door.

KENNETH Yes.

SANDRA Don't want next door looking after him.

KENNETH What?

SANDRA Don't trust them.

KENNETH Why not?

SANDRA

KENNETH Why not?

SANDRA They're loud.

KENNETH Loud.

SANDRA Always shouting.

KENNETH Remind you of anyone?

SANDRA Not like we do, nothing like us, they do it in public, out the door, they seem a bit violent if you ask me.

KENNETH Up to them how they want to be, none of our business.

SANDRA Up to them alright yes yes, although it's annoying first thing in the morning when you want some peace and quiet, sorting out your car first thing and there she is, the mum, shouting her face off out the front door.

Not sure how they're even in that house. They can't have bought it.

Not being...

You know what I mean.

It's not cheap round here.

Pause.

KENNETH The bill came today.

SANDRA What?

KENNETH School fees.

SANDRA How much?

KENNETH ...

SANDRA Christ.

KENNETH I know. So.

Beat.

What was it tonight?

SANDRA A meeting.

KENNETH With?

SANDRA Chris.

Beat.

KENNETH Chris again.

SANDRA What? Chris again yes again Chris again yes. What?

KENNETH These late meetings.

SANDRA It's busy at the moment we don't get a chance in the days and then we bump into each other at five o'clock and we're like oh god there's about twelve things we need to sort out before tomorrow so we have to sit down and go through them there and then.

KENNETH Sit down?

SANDRA Yes, we sit down.

KENNETH What do you mean?

SANDRA A meeting.

KENNETH You sit down.

SANDRA Yes we sit down we tried standing up but our legs got tired.

KENNETH Where?

SANDRA What?

KENNETH Where do you sit down together?

SANDRA Alright Columbo.

KENNETH Just a question. Don't make me / feel stupid asking.

SANDRA 'Sit down together.'

KENNETH Sandra I'm not –

SANDRA You're implying something.

KENNETH When you arrived tonight you smelt of gin.

SANDRA We had a drink together.

KENNETH A drink together.

SANDRA Together yes.

KENNETH Always *together*.

SANDRA It's kind of what a *meeting* implies, Kenneth.

KENNETH So the meeting was...

SANDRA Yes? The meeting was... what?

KENNETH Where. Where was the meeting?

SANDRA Well...

She looks at him.

Sometimes we go to the pub, shocking I know but it's the evening and we can't *bear* to stay in the office.

Look at you. Your face quivering. Me and him in the pub. Ooo what might happen. Kenneth you think I'm having an affair.

KENNETH How many?

SANDRA Affairs? None.

KENNETH Not affairs. How many –

SANDRA Meetings? With Chris? We *work together*.

KENNETH How many gins?

SANDRA Gins.

KENNETH Before you drove.

SANDRA Oh how many gins. I see. I don't know.

KENNETH That's the worst answer to that question.

SANDRA A couple?

KENNETH A couple like two, or a couple like five.

SANDRA Like two.

KENNETH *Like* two?

SANDRA Oh stop.

KENNETH Stop what? You're all over the place I think you're completely off the leash at the moment, I don't know what you're up to.

A moment.

SANDRA Alright.

KENNETH What?

SANDRA What if I was?

KENNETH What?

SANDRA Having an affair, what if I was?

KENNETH Are you?

SANDRA Let's have a conversation.

KENNETH So you are.

SANDRA No. But what if I was?

KENNETH I'm not playing a game. Not tonight. We can do this some other time.

SANDRA Ken...

KENNETH What? This is hypothetical or something.

SANDRA Yes! Hypothetical. Exactly.

KENNETH I'm serious. I want to talk to you, I want you to be honest, this isn't funny.

SANDRA I'm just talking Kenneth. I'm just asking what you'd do if I was.

KENNETH This is a test now?

SANDRA This is a question.

KENNETH You mean you want to.

SANDRA There's something up with you tonight.

KENNETH I've had enough. Yes, / I've had enough –

SANDRA I want a conversation Kenneth. We've always been able to do that.

KENNETH Alright.

SANDRA You wouldn't want to trap me.

KENNETH So you feel trapped?

SANDRA Hypothetically.

KENNETH Of course I don't want to trap you, / where does that –

SANDRA We always said we've always said there's nothing worse than being stuck.

KENNETH So what have you done?

SANDRA Because we're going to die.

KENNETH What have you done?

SANDRA Nothing.

Beat.

KENNETH We're going to die, that's true Sandra, a rare admission on your part, death approaches, so what have you –

SANDRA When I look in the mirror these days I see a ghost.

KENNETH The cigarettes don't help.

SANDRA Decay. All the time.

KENNETH So what are you saying?

A moment.

 You've found someone.

SANDRA This is going round and round your head isn't it?

KENNETH Someone younger.

SANDRA Someone *younger*? No.

KENNETH Or older. Chris.

SANDRA I haven't found anyone I'm asking a question. I'm simply inviting a discussion about a subject but you're getting all jumpy and twitchy about it – *Chris*?

KENNETH You can tell me.

SANDRA *Chris*? No.

KENNETH Really. Tell me honestly.

SANDRA Kenneth.

KENNETH Honestly.

SANDRA Chris?

KENNETH I'll go first.

SANDRA Go first at what?

KENNETH I'll lay it out.

SANDRA Ken –

KENNETH The truth. We haven't properly talked for –

SANDRA We're very busy.

KENNETH I have.

SANDRA Have what?

KENNETH I have slept with someone else.

SANDRA You...

Beat.

KENNETH Your turn.

SANDRA Wait wait.

KENNETH Okay. I've said it. Your turn.

A moment. She looks at him.

SANDRA You...

KENNETH I'm not the only one am I?

SANDRA I was talking hypothetically.

KENNETH Come on

SANDRA What?

KENNETH The meetings, the secrets.

SANDRA What secrets?

KENNETH We can talk about the details when / it's out.

SANDRA No we can talk about the details now.

KENNETH Who was it?

SANDRA There isn't / anyone.

KENNETH Chris?

SANDRA No. Chris? No. Chris is ridiculous. For fuck's sake Kenneth.

KENNETH Right.
I thought...

SANDRA No.

KENNETH Right. Shit.

SANDRA More wine?
She pours more wine.
So?
Let's have it.

KENNETH I was angry. I met a girl. Her name was Frankie.

SANDRA That's a boy's name.

KENNETH And a girl's name I believe.

SANDRA Are you sure it wasn't a boy?

KENNETH Yeah.

SANDRA How do you know?

KENNETH I know.
She takes that in.

SANDRA How old?

KENNETH Does it matter?

SANDRA I'm not angry here Kenneth.

KENNETH Yes but –

SANDRA Look at me, look at my body language my expression.

KENNETH Alright.

SANDRA You see I'm acting surprisingly calm considering I'm the victim.

KENNETH You're never the victim.

SANDRA You've messed me around.

KENNETH Yes.

SANDRA Yes so does it matter? It matters to me. So.

KENNETH Alright.

SANDRA How old?

KENNETH Look –

SANDRA HOW OLD?

KENNETH Early twenties?

SANDRA What does she do?

KENNETH I don't know.

SANDRA Did you catch a surname in the course of the evening?

KENNETH

SANDRA

KENNETH Exactly. You're right. That's exactly what it was like.

SANDRA In and out.

KENNETH Bit more to it than that but –

SANDRA In essence.

KENNETH Yeah

SANDRA BLOODY HELL KEN. BLOODY FUCKING HELL.

KENNETH I'm sorry.

Pause.

SANDRA FRANKIE.

KENNETH Frankie.

She looks at him.

A moment.

SANDRA Cigarette?

KENNETH Don't be stupid.

She rolls a cigarette across the table.

He looks at it.

She throws him the lighter.

A moment.

He lights up.

SANDRA Blonde?

KENNETH No.

SANDRA Redhead?

KENNETH Brunette.

SANDRA Tall?

KENNETH Ish.

SANDRA Looked like me did she?

KENNETH No she –

SANDRA From the little you remember?

KENNETH From what I can remember she wasn't a patch on you.

SANDRA Oh.

Beat.

KENNETH But yes, she was...

SANDRA She was... what? She was what?

KENNETH Fresh.

SANDRA Fresh.

KENNETH

SANDRA Fresh *meat*.

KENNETH If you like.

SANDRA Right.

KENNETH Yes.

SANDRA Yes.

KENNETH Yes she smelt different.

SANDRA You're not sorry.

KENNETH Not sorry.

SANDRA Are you? You love me, your feelings towards me are exactly the same but you had a great time with her you just had a really good new kind of sex.

KENNETH Yeah.

SANDRA Then don't apologise then. If you're not sorry, take it back.

KENNETH ...

SANDRA Then don't apologise then. If you're not sorry, take it back.

SANDRA TAKE IT BACK!

KENNETH Alright.

ROSE *bursts in, crying.*

ROSE I told you both to shut up and you're shouting your bloody mouths off, I told you and Mark was on the phone and he was like what's that? And I tried to tell him it was the television but he thought you were shouting at me, he said it clearly wasn't a good time and hung up but we had to *talk* about something, it gave him an excuse to – now I have to go into school tomorrow and – Oh –

She sees KENNETH with a cigarette.

What, you're smoking now?

KENNETH

ROSE

SANDRA

ROSE Fucking hell you two are the shittiest fucking parents. I
fucking hate you.

She storms out.

SANDRA Five minutes sweetheart.

ROSE *has gone.*

KENNETH You understand why I did it. I think you know.

SANDRA No I don't know.

KENNETH That's why you're not angry, there was a bit of you that
wanted this, you want me to do something exactly like this.

SANDRA I was happy with you.

KENNETH No you wanted something more, that's why you started this
hypothetical thing you wanted me to say –

SANDRA Kenneth I love you, I'm a lucky girl most men your age are
sagging, but look at you –

KENNETH You could go for someone younger then.

SANDRA What are you doing?

KENNETH I'm talking hypothetically.

SANDRA Yes. I could go for someone younger yes.

Beat.

KENNETH We're in love.

SANDRA I thought so.

Beat.

KENNETH But something's gone wrong.

SANDRA No.

KENNETH We live in Reading.

Something's gone wrong.

SANDRA ...

KENNETH It's all house. Children. Work. We never wanted it like this.
I'm not happy you're not happy so

...

They look at each other. It's true.

Right.

Yes. There.

SANDRA ...

KENNETH Chris?

SANDRA ...

KENNETH Yes?

SANDRA We should get the kids down here it's nearly...

KENNETH Sandra –

SANDRA Jamie!

KENNETH Sandra I can see –

SANDRA Jamie! It's time.

KENNETH I know what you've done why won't you admit / it?

SANDRA Rosie, three minutes! Come down, we're doing the cake! If I have Ken, if I had done something as well, how would that help, if we'd both been lying to each other what are you suggesting we do?

KENNETH Chris. Yes?

SANDRA Jesus Ken leave it / alone

KENNETH I don't know what we do but at least we could start with the truth. We were never like this, we were honest.

SANDRA I'm getting the cake.

KENNETH Chris.

SANDRA No.

KENNETH Yes.

SANDRA NO!

KENNETH Sandra

SANDRA Alright!

Yes. Fresh meat. Exactly. Four months. He's good. It helps.

Alright?

KENNETH Yes.

SANDRA Good.

Now we're really in trouble. Well done.

JAMIE *enters.*

Come and sit down Jamie, would you like some wine?

JAMIE What?

KENNETH He's fourteen.

JAMIE Okay. Is this because it's Rosie's birthday?

SANDRA How about a cigarette?

JAMIE Mum...

KENNETH Ignore her.

SANDRA He smokes anyway.

JAMIE No I don't.

SANDRA Oh come ON.

JAMIE I've had a –

SANDRA Just *take one.*

He looks at her. She's serious.

JAMIE Alright.

He does.

Got a lighter?

She gives him one, he lights it effortlessly.

Where's Rosie?

SANDRA I'm just going to get the cake.

She goes, shouting on her way.

Rosie if you don't come down now there'll be trouble!
We've made an effort for you don't want you sulking. I'll
show her shouting.

ROSIE!

NOW!

She goes out.

Pause.

JAMIE and KENNETH look at each other.

JAMIE Didn't know you smoked Dad.

KENNETH Yeah.

JAMIE It suits you.

KENNETH Thanks.

Beat.

You too.

JAMIE Thanks.

They smoke.

ROSE comes in, very unhappy. She sits.

Do you want a cigarette?

ROSE Shut up.

Silence.

They sit together.

KENNETH checks his watch.

KENNETH Thirty seconds.

Silence.

Then –

SANDRA *(From off.)* Happy birthday to you!

They all join in as SANDRA enters with the cake. Fifteen candles are lit. She puts it on the table.

ALL *(Apart from ROSE.)* Happy birthday to you.
Happy birthday dear Rosie.
Happy birthday to you!

A moment. They look at ROSE.

Blow them out then.

She does.

They don't all go out.

She sits for a moment.

She's about to do the rest when JAMIE blows them out, with lots of smoke.

Oh.

KENNETH Jamie!

JAMIE She didn't do it properly.

SANDRA Ahhh! My little boy smoking in front of his mother.

A proper family at last.

Cake everyone?

She divides up the cake.

Now as you might've heard, your father and I have been having a conversation, an adult conversation but since you're both grown up now in your own way tonight I think we should lay it out for you what do you think Ken?

KENNETH No I don't think we should actually / Sandra.

SANDRA Your father went and found someone else and had sex with her. Her name was Frankie.

ROSE looks at her dad. JAMIE smokes.

She was young. It was revenge as he thought I was having an affair myself which if we're honest, if we're really laying this all out for you in the middle of the night, well... there's a man called Chris. Chris is not the sort of man you would expect me to be sleeping with, but it seems that both of us have felt in some way frustrated and we've found a way out – does everyone have a piece of cake?

No one replies.

KENNETH Can we talk about / this later –

SANDRA Now we still both love each other, don't worry about that. But we both feel trapped, we live, as you know, in Reading, and we never intended to be in this domestic situation we are both feeling that maybe human beings were not designed to be monogamous do you both know what that word means?

Neither answers.

We both feel that maybe sleeping around is our natural state, so that in itself might have been alright but the issue – and Ken do correct me – the issue is trust. We can't be lying to each other. That would be pointless.

As you grow up, both of you, you'll learn that in love as everything else there is no such thing as a happy ending. We're animals.

So the question we have is –

ROSE Why are you telling us this?

SANDRA Rosie I'm talking. Eat your cake. We're animals and what happens happens so the conclusion your father and I have come to is that we should get divorced that's right isn't it Ken? We didn't want to mention it to you until we were sure

but having talked about it I think we've come to a joint decision now haven't we?

KENNETH A divorce?

SANDRA I know it must be difficult, but it's the right thing.

KENNETH Sandra SHUT / UP.

ROSE / I don't want to hear THIS!

SANDRA It's really important we don't confuse our children and really a divorce is the only way forward.

KENNETH It's what you want?

SANDRA The only way we can be free. And we always said –

ROSE Why are you telling us like this?

SANDRA It's not fair on the children us going at each other / all the time.

ROSE I asked a question.

SANDRA Ken, we've made a decision really haven't we, and we'll stay in touch. We'll still be friends.

KENNETH I don't know.

SANDRA I think things are different now I think things have changed, we're entitled to do our own thing follow our own path, no one can tell us what's *right*, not church not the government, not even our children, it's no one's business but our own.

We've got our lives to live Ken, you, me, Rosie, Jamie, when it comes down to it we're all separate people these days. On our own paths.

There's a bit of you that's excited about this. Isn't there?

There's a little bit of you excited about the possibilities of striking out, on your own?

KENNETH Yes.

Pause.

SANDRA So there we are children. Mum and Dad are going to be happier.

And trust me. You'll be happier too.

ROSE *suddenly gets up and leaves.*

A moment.

KENNETH Why?

SANDRA Did you say something?

KENNETH Why are you involving them?

SANDRA Because technically we're a family.

Look. Jamie's still here.

JAMIE *is smoking and not looking at them.*

He's pleased I've laid it all out.

He's pleased we're up front so he knows what's coming. They know about their parents. They're not children. He smokes. Rosie's doing all sorts of thing with her *boyfriend* I bet she's having a whale of a time.

JAMIE She's split up with him.

KENNETH What?

JAMIE He slept with Sarah Franks last weekend. She's only just found out. That's what she was doing on the phone. Heard her crying. He doesn't want her any more.

SANDRA Well... Proves my point. No happy endings.

Pause.

ROSE *screams from upstairs.*

What was –

JAMIE It's Rosie.

KENNETH She sounded –

Another scream. KENNETH goes.

SANDRA waits for a second, unsure, then goes after KENNETH. Another scream. Sobbing.

From off:

Rosie!

SANDRA *Rosie!*

KENNETH *Are you alright? It's not important. What your mother was saying...*

Sobbing. Banging. JAMIE lights another cigarette.

Open the door Rosie.

A banging.

Rosie!

More banging and shouting.

JAMIE goes and puts the tape back in.

'She Bangs the Drums' plays again – picking up from where it left off.

JAMIE sings along quietly.

Underneath the banging and the shouting continues.

JAMIE gets the rest of the wine and drinks from the bottle.

As the curtain falls and the lights fade the music mixes with the banging on the door.

In the dark just a thumping.

Interval.

THREE

Thumping.

We hear 'Sexy Chick' by David Guetta feat. Akon. As the drums come in... curtain up to reveal...

2011. A living room in a large country house. French windows open out onto a large garden. Light pours in. An iPad is plugged into a dock – playing the music and the video to the song.

ROSE enters, with a bag, having come in the front door. She is now thirty-seven, lives in London, and is dressed in slightly old, dark clothes.

She looks around – where is everyone?

JAMIE enters through the French windows with his iPhone. He is thirty-five, unshaven, and wearing a grey hooded top. He tips the iPhone around, playing 'Labyrinth' intently. Doesn't look up. Nods in time with the music.

He stops. Still doesn't look up.

Then she goes over and switches off the iPad. JAMIE turns round.

JAMIE Oh.

ROSE smiles.

ROSE Hello.

She goes over and hugs him.

JAMIE Aren't you coming this afternoon?

ROSE It is this afternoon.

JAMIE Dad said you were coming back when it finished

ROSE It has finished.

JAMIE Oh. Have you seen this? It's a game, you... you have to get the ball in the hole.

ROSE Right.

JAMIE You've got a phone though?

ROSE Yeah.

JAMIE Yeah you should download it then.
He goes back to playing it.

ROSE How's things?

JAMIE Yeah good.

ROSE The job?

JAMIE Yeah it's alright. You know, it's you know it's flexible.

ROSE Been there a while now.

JAMIE What?

ROSE Been driving for them a while.

JAMIE Yeah six months or whatever.

ROSE You like it?

JAMIE Yeah yeah.

ROSE You still doing your course?

JAMIE What? No.

ROSE You...

JAMIE Didn't... teacher was shit.

ROSE Right.

JAMIE Giving it all – Didn't know what he was talking about. I was
I was cleverer than him I could tell I was like, er have you
have you thought of the social factor he didn't know what I
what I was talking about I was like this guy's a fraud this
guy doesn't know anything. I get bored quickly.

ROSE I know.

JAMIE Didn't like it so I stopped.
Beat.

ROSE So what is it now?

JAMIE Gonna go travelling.

ROSE You said that before.

JAMIE Saving up.

ROSE Where?

JAMIE Australia. My my my friend – you remember – Kate.

ROSE You're still in touch with her.

JAMIE Yeah Facebook. Gonna go and stay with her, for a bit.

ROSE Right.

JAMIE Supposed to be mental out there.

ROSE Right.

 Mental.

JAMIE Yeah.

Beat.

ROSE You didn't want to come today?

JAMIE How did he die?

ROSE Didn't dad tell you? Cancer.

JAMIE Yeah didn't want to come. Not my thing.

ROSE Right.

JAMIE That okay?

ROSE Yeah.

Beat.

 How's dad?

JAMIE Alright.

ROSE Must be around the house a bit more now.

JAMIE Yeah.

ROSE Annoying is it?

JAMIE No it's good. He picks me up.

ROSE What?

JAMIE From the pub.

ROSE Right.

JAMIE We get on so. Yeah. Can be annoying but you but you. You get used to it.

ROSE Right. Jamie?

JAMIE What?

ROSE Can you stop playing that for a minute?

JAMIE What? Oh... what? Is it is it? I'm not being rude.

ROSE I haven't seen you in months.

JAMIE I'm not being rude. Don't get annoyed.

She sighs.

 Don't get annoyed with me.

ROSE I'm asking you Jamie.

JAMIE Right, right. Hang on.

Pause.

He stops.

Puts it away, walks around a bit.

 What then? What do you want then?

ROSE Nothing, just... do you want a cup of tea?

JAMIE Nah I'm alright.

Beat.

ROSE What happened with the flat?

JAMIE What? Oh.

ROSE Last time I was here you were trying to find somewhere.

JAMIE Too expensive it's like I could spend all my money on the rent you know or I can live here and have money no contest and as I as I said Dad's cool, he's like a mate, but I don't have to

ROSE Don't have to pay rent.

JAMIE Yeah exactly. It's expensive. Costs loads.

ROSE I know.

JAMIE Yeah. Do you rent?

ROSE Of course.

JAMIE Yeah right so you so you know.

ROSE It's more expensive in London.

JAMIE I couldn't live in London. I went there the other day, we went there went there to see a play.

ROSE What?

JAMIE *Wicked*.

ROSE That's a musical.

JAMIE Yeah it was good, but we went to the pub and it was like five quid for a pint and we were we were like I said I said I think there's a mistake you're charging us five quid and the guy – everyone in London's rude you know? You know?

ROSE Who did you go with?

JAMIE What?

ROSE To see *Wicked*.

JAMIE Dad.

ROSE You didn't say.

JAMIE What?

ROSE I'm in London. You didn't call I could've met you.

JAMIE Didn't... what? Didn't think of it. So. What? Shit. Don't get annoyed with me yeah?

ROSE I'm not.

JAMIE What is this?

ROSE No.

JAMIE Sounds like you you were so so

ROSE It doesn't matter, I'm glad you liked the show.

JAMIE Yeah it was good. Interval, it was good it had an interval you can go out have a smoke.

ROSE Right.

JAMIE hears something. Looks out the window.

JAMIE Dad.

ROSE Right.

JAMIE Out there.

Suddenly JAMIE goes out the French windows.

ROSE is left on her own.

She looks around.

The house is beautiful.

Expensive equipment, art, ornaments. Perfect.

She goes to the wall.

Touches it.

Leans on it. Something's wrong.

KENNETH enters through the French windows. He is now sixty-four, and wears a dark suit and a black tie. He is still looking healthy. JAMIE follows behind him. He has a black bag.

KENNETH My favourite daughter.

ROSE Your only daughter.

KENNETH This is true. Sharp as a button.

ROSE Buttons aren't sharp.

KENNETH I meant bright.

ROSE I think you did.

KENNETH Bright as a button.

ROSE There you are.

KENNETH My favourite daughter.
He kisses and hugs her. Then takes his jacket and tie off.
That went okay, didn't it?

ROSE Yeah.

KENNETH Sorry we didn't get to talk but... stuff. All okay getting there?

ROSE Got a taxi from the station.

KENNETH You didn't want to drive?

ROSE Got rid of my car.

KENNETH Oh right.

ROSE Ages ago.

KENNETH Suppose it's not worth it in London?

ROSE Well...

KENNETH And the train was alright?

ROSE Yeah.

KENNETH I can't stand them, not these days. Wait – how did you get here. Afterwards.

ROSE Taxi.

KENNETH Again? I could have given you a lift. Had to say goodbye to everyone but –

ROSE I thought I'd get out the way.

Out of the bag, KENNETH gets out a small black functional urn, and puts it on a shelf. Then, over the next dialogue, he goes to a small fridge and produces a bottle of wine, from which he pours a glass.

KENNETH That pub wasn't bad though in the end. Not a bad place for it. Good view. You want a drink?

ROSE I'm alright thanks. Got water.

KENNETH We're on white wine at the moment. Aren't we Jamie?

JAMIE Yeah. Yeah.

KENNETH Colin got back from France on Monday. You know Colin?

ROSE No.

KENNETH Plays golf, he went on a bit of booze cruise, we put in an order didn't we?

JAMIE Yeah.

KENNETH And here are the fruits, of his labour, bottled up, he went for quality, all the way to the south and you really can taste the difference. Sit down sit down.

They do. ROSE looks at the urn.

ROSE Didn't he want to be buried?

KENNETH I don't know, he didn't leave instructions.

ROSE You never discussed it?

Where are you going to scatter them then?

KENNETH We'll work something out.

So. Anyway.

Exciting.

ROSE What?

KENNETH Your news.

ROSE It's not news.

KENNETH I loved it, calling us up, ‘Since we’ll be together anyway, I want a moment to talk.’

ROSE Right.

KENNETH ‘Since we’re all in the same place for once.’

ROSE

KENNETH ‘I have something to say’

ROSE Yeah.

KENNETH It’s good. It’s a good excuse – haven’t properly spoken to your mother in months. Did you see her?

ROSE What?

KENNETH Just now. At the pub. Did you see what she was up to?

ROSE No.

KENNETH Flirting with the barman. Clive couldn’t make it in the end so she took the opportunity. Flirting away with this bloke behind the bar.

ROSE She was getting drunk.

KENNETH That’s what she’s like.

ROSE Yes.

KENNETH Uncontrollable.

ROSE Uncontrollable.

KENNETH Got to admire her really.

ROSE She’s not driving here is she?

KENNETH No. I’m sure... she. Actually yes she probably is.
Fingers crossed! Get out the way!

ROSE So irresponsible.

Pause.

KENNETH You alright love?

ROSE ...
Beat.

KENNETH Jamie's still got his job.

ROSE Yeah I know. He said.
It's good.

KENNETH Yeah.
They're both looking at JAMIE, who's not been listening.

JAMIE What?

KENNETH How's the flat?

ROSE Fine.

KENNETH And Sarah?

ROSE What?

KENNETH It is Sarah? Your flatmate.

ROSE She moved out last year.

KENNETH Oh right, who is it now then?

ROSE This bloke Paul.

KENNETH A bloke – what does Andrew make of that? – who's Paul?

ROSE Some guy from Gumtree.

KENNETH Gumtree?

ROSE You advertise on it if you've got a room going.

KENNETH So Paul's really just some bloke?

ROSE Yeah.

KENNETH Is that. That's...

ROSE What?

KENNETH You're happy with that are you?

ROSE Not really.

KENNETH Wouldn't have been allowed when I was your age, sharing –
man and a women. Together like that, would've been an
outrage. A sin.

ROSE Well the rent needs paying.

Beat.

KENNETH You know if you need any help with anything.

ROSE Yeah.

KENNETH Good good.

*Suddenly JAMIE unzips his hoody, takes off his T-shirt and
strides out into the sun of the garden.*

He's off then.

Beat.

ROSE Is he alright?

KENNETH What do you mean?

ROSE He seems worse.

KENNETH Don't know what you mean.

ROSE The repeating. The – he's going round in circles.

KENNETH Rosie, you always say this, I think it's cruel.

ROSE He used to be bright.

KENNETH He's his own person. He's very intelligent.

ROSE But he's not Dad. He really isn't. Not any more.

KENNETH He's just – he doesn't fit in to what people want. But he's
wonderful. When he had that thing in the centre with the
disabled kids.

ROSE He never turned up.

KENNETH It was early mornings, but when he was there he was
brilliant. Why do you want to get at him?

ROSE I just wonder if he should... get help or something.

KENNETH Leave him alone. He's happy.

ROSE But that's not –

KENNETH What?

Beat.

ROSE Nothing.

KENNETH Are you alright?

 ROSE *turns away.*

A strange moment.

Then she turns back.

ROSE How's retirement?

KENNETH I don't know why I didn't do it before. Time's my own. Me and Jamie we do the garden, he likes it, then we go to the pub. It's bliss. Golf. Perfect.

ROSE Good.

KENNETH You know I worked out with the pension and the payments, and the income from the Birmingham house, I'm making over eighty thousand a year.

ROSE Right.

KENNETH Not bad for doing nothing.

ROSE Yeah.

KENNETH And I mean now you're all out of university or whatever, and everything's paid off so the money's my own. Good isn't it?

ROSE Yeah.

KENNETH Life of luxury.

ROSE Eighty thousand.

KENNETH Yep.

ROSE Almost three times what I make now.

KENNETH What? No. Is it?

ROSE Yeah, and I'm working all the time.

KENNETH Really?

ROSE ...

KENNETH Well at least you're doing what you want to do aren't you?

ROSE ...

A doorbell.

KENNETH There she is. Safe and sound but a trail of destruction in her wake, no doubt. Pretty much sums her up...

He goes out.

ROSE *nearly cries, but stops herself.*

Voices offstage.

SANDRA You've done something to the front?

KENNETH Landscaped the drive.

SANDRA Looks cheap.

KENNETH My choice.

SANDRA Just saying Kenneth, no need / to snap at me.

KENNETH I know, I know you're always / just saying.

SANDRA Is she here?

KENNETH She's in a mood.

SANDRA Oh good, just what I want to contend with after a funeral, one of Rosie's *moods*.

KENNETH Be careful.

SANDRA I'm always careful. Through here?

They enter. SANDRA is now sixty-four, dressed expensively and tastefully in black for the occasion and the weather. Her skin is amazing. She has looked after herself.

Hello!

ROSE Hi Mum.

SANDRA goes and kisses and hugs ROSE.

SANDRA Look at you. My baby. Were you at the wake just now?

ROSE Yes.

SANDRA I didn't see you. But here we both are, your father and your mother together again isn't it something? You look healthy.

ROSE What does that mean?

SANDRA Healthy. Healthy. Not ill. Healthy. What do you think it means?

ROSE Fat?

SANDRA Don't be silly you're not fat, why haven't you got a drink?

ROSE I don't want one.

SANDRA Diet?

ROSE No.

SANDRA Pregnant?

ROSE No.

SANDRA Because you've called us all together to tell us something and now you're not drinking.

ROSE I'm not pregnant.

SANDRA You're sure?

ROSE Mum –

SANDRA I was convinced that's what this was about, well never mind, I know I could do with a drink.

KENNETH We're on the wine.

SANDRA Are you? You never had any taste for wine. Your dad, Rosie, he never had any taste for anything, except women – he didn't do too badly there.

KENNETH I'll get you a glass.

SANDRA That's an idea, and music, I suppose he knew a thing or two about his music. Come on sit down then. How are you? Not pregnant we know that. How's it going?

ROSE Good.

SANDRA How are the gigs?

ROSE On and off.

SANDRA I loved it at Christmas.

ROSE Yeah it was good you came.

SANDRA I loved it. We both enjoyed it.

ROSE How's Clive?

SANDRA Not well.

ROSE Right.

SANDRA But we ply him with booze and it does the trick.
Doctor says it won't help but I think Clive's long past that, and we say will it actually kill him? All the booze and doctor says not immediately so off we go, gin, sherry, this whisky we got from Islay. You've not been to Islay have you Ken?

KENNETH I haven't had the pleasure no.
He gives her some wine.
There you are.

SANDRA Well you've should. Why don't you go with Kerry?

KENNETH Not with Kerry any more.

ROSE They split up.

SANDRA What?

KENNETH I split up with Kerry months ago.

SANDRA Why?

KENNETH *shrugs.*

You're such a *man* Ken, look at him. You should update me. Put it on Facebook. I'm on Facebook now. I love it. Ken you should join now you're single.

KENNETH Jamie tried to set me up but it's all nonsense really isn't it? Poking and walls and everything else.

SANDRA Baby I looked you up, why aren't you on it?

ROSE I was.

SANDRA All your friends are. You were? What happened?

ROSE I deleted my account.

SANDRA Why?

ROSE ...

SANDRA Well I love it. Photos, all of that. It's good for flirting too and Clive doesn't understand computers won't go near one, so it's entirely safe. You know you can actually chat to people on it? I love it. This wine isn't bad Ken.

KENNETH Told you.

SANDRA Where's it from?

KENNETH France. Got twenty bottles in the garage. You can take one with you.

SANDRA You can give me a couple when I go.

KENNETH I just said that.

SANDRA What?

KENNETH I'll give you a case.

SANDRA Lovely. This isn't bad. Where's Jamie?

ROSE Sunbathing.

SANDRA He knows what's good for him. Bless him.

KENNETH Shall I...

SANDRA No don't disturb him wouldn't get any sense out of him anyway, away with the fairies, see him later.

ROSE It was a shame he didn't make it today.

KENNETH Not his thing.

SANDRA Shall we get started? Get it over and done with? Very exciting.
Isn't it?
You want to talk to us.

ROSE Dad can you sit down?

KENNETH Oh right.

SANDRA He's always the same isn't he? No attention span.
Look at him.

KENNETH I just can't concentrate any more. No need to. I love it.
Freedom! At last!

SANDRA Your father, still all over the place. Come on Ken. Sit down. She's getting annoyed. She wants us all to *talk*.

ROSE I'm not annoyed.

SANDRA See?
He sits down.

KENNETH I have now sat down.

SANDRA Alright then love.
All yours. Off you go.

ROSE Don't...

SANDRA What?

ROSE Don't patronise me.

SANDRA What?

ROSE I'm not a kid.

SANDRA I know. We all know that. What a strange thing to say.
Of course you're not.

ROSE

SANDRA I'm just saying, I'm here for you. We're listening. Gosh.

KENNETH Let her speak.

SANDRA I am. That's what I'm doing. I'm prompting.
Speak.
Go on love.
Pause.

ROSE I want you to buy me a house.

SANDRA *smiles.*

KENNETH *laughs.*

SANDRA A house?

KENNETH *laughs some more.*

KENNETH You've got a house.

ROSE I'm renting.

KENNETH Your flat.

ROSE I rent it.

KENNETH Thought you liked it.

ROSE I... No.

...I...

Oh.

KENNETH What's the matter love?

SANDRA Something's wrong isn't it? I can tell.

ROSE *laughs.*

ROSE Yeah one or two things yeah one or two things have gone a bit wrong.

SANDRA Come on then.

KENNETH We've got nothing else to do this afternoon love.

ROSE Don't get drunk.

SANDRA I've only just arrived. Look as I said we're here for you, but we don't need to be insulted.

 Yes?

 We're well past that. Aren't we Ken? We can do without.

 Yes?

 Let's make that clear.

KENNETH We won't get drunk love.

Pause. ROSE gathers herself again.

ROSE I'm thirty-seven.

SANDRA Yes we know. My baby.

ROSE It was my birthday, in March.

SANDRA We sent you a card. Didn't we? Clive and I did anyway, Kenneth did you?

ROSE Mum!

KENNETH Course I / sent her a card

ROSE Shut up yeah?

SANDRA Okay, alright, we've been having fun, having a good time up till now but maybe it's not clear Rosie I don't have to be shouted at, you understand? We could all be doing lots of / other things –

ROSE Do what you like.

SANDRA Just carry on.

ROSE So... my birthday. I had a little thing in a bar in Clapham, hired out this little bar, and all my friends came, and two days before I didn't tell you this, but *two days* before my birthday I broke up with Andy.

KENNETH You didn't... oh... you're not with.

ROSE No.

KENNETH You didn't say.

ROSE You never asked.

SANDRA You don't like us asking.

ROSE Yeah so I'd already booked this bar, and I went ahead with it anyway even though I was quite... *lonely*... you know.

SANDRA Oh baby.

ROSE And everyone turned up and some of them with kids and stuff and we had a bit of a dance you know, kept the smiles going but then suddenly I found I was sat on a chair at the side of the room, all on my own, at my own party, and I was crying.

SANDRA Were you drinking gin?

ROSE No.

SANDRA Gin can do that.

ROSE I wasn't drinking at all Mum but I found I was crying, and it was because I realised as I was sat there, I realised I'd completely fucked it up.

SANDRA What?

ROSE I... thought I'm thirty-seven and I've had a good time in London, sort of – but what have I got? No flat, no kids, no partner, no car, ten thousand in unsecured debt.

SANDRA You're doing what you wanted darling, not many people can
—

ROSE What I wanted at seventeen but I'm nearly forty and I've got nothing.

And I was sat there at the side of the room and I thought where did it go wrong? And walking down the street it hit me and the more I thought about it the more obvious it was.

It's your fault. All of it.

I wanted to tell you. I thought you should know.

KENNETH Our fault.

SANDRA Baby.

You're upset I understand, you're obviously in some kind of state we can see that but don't turn this at us, you're being ridiculous. / We've given you everything –

ROSE Don't get *offended*. Listen to me.

SANDRA Well you're accusing us of –

ROSE I've done everything / I was told to do.

SANDRA Just stood there and accusing us of ruining your life, this melodramatic streak / it comes from your father.

ROSE I worked hard at school, / got my results.

KENNETH What's that supposed to mean?

ROSE You said go to university to get a job so that's what I did, but when I came out there weren't any jobs.

SANDRA A degree was something to fall back on.

ROSE A degree means nothing.

SANDRA Well you didn't need it in the end anyway you –

ROSE Yeah right exactly, as you said I should, as you *encouraged* me to do, I followed my dream, did what you said was *important*, following my *passion*.

SANDRA You're really talking look at her Ken.

KENNETH I am

ROSE I didn't settle down too early, didn't compromise and I *thought* I really believed, because you *told me* Mum, you *assured* me, that a woman can have it all, you were my example.

SANDRA I'll take / that as a compliment –

ROSE – you said, as did everyone else, there's no hurry to have kids these days, so I waited until I had built up my career, but the problem was my career never happened.

KENNETH You weren't to know how / things would turn out.

ROSE Well I was to know

SANDRA You've done alright.

ROSE I was to know for a simple reason which is that *I'm not very good*. But you always encouraged me. Everyone did, my teachers, you, the college, all of them said I should keep going when obviously, looking back, *clearly* –

KENNETH It's just difficult, it's a difficult / profession –

ROSE Everyone knew. All the time, you knew I wasn't great, but out of *kindness*, you didn't say and instead just watched me entirely fuck up waste my life away.

SANDRA

ROSE All my friends who got proper boring jobs have a brilliant time – for fifteen years they've been able to afford parties, drinks, holidays while I'm still temping between gigs, and then they had babies but I waited, I was working too much, too hard, with music, this *hobby*, but now I'm old, really old. You know where Andy's gone?

SANDRA Look –

KENNETH Andy? What do you mean?

ROSE She's twenty-four and desperate for kids. That's where he's gone.

To her. She doesn't want a career.

So where does that leave me?

KENNETH Love –

ROSE Stuck on the bottom fucking shelf.

Beat.

KENNETH You said it was what you wanted.

ROSE I needed guidance, real honest guidance when I was young – perspective, but instead you let me, you encouraged me to –

SANDRA Is this getting to a point darling?

ROSE Yes it's getting to a *point*.

SANDRA Because it sounds like a moan.

ROSE Well sorry for taking up your time Mum.

SANDRA I can think of better ways to spend my afternoon.

ROSE Granny and Grandad lived through the war, lived through rations, their lot built the welfare state. They *worked* hard.

KENNETH We've worked hard. Forty years, both of us, every day –

ROSE And what have you lot done? Climbed the ladder and broke it as you went.

SANDRA Kenneth top me up. This is good stuff.

He does.

ROSE You got your cheap flights and your nice cars but never looked at what they were doing to the environment, you hate immigrants, love the *Daily Mail* – voted in Thatcher, destroyed the unions, reduced taxes, Tony fucking Blair –

SANDRA / Politics!

ROSE – now surprise surprise you've voted in the Tories again. All because you want to cling on to your money but here I am, your own daughter, and I can't afford a house, a car – a child.

SANDRA It's not too late, you're not even forty.

ROSE At my age you had a house, half paid off, two kids, holidays, money.

KENNETH It was different then.

SANDRA That's right, completely different.

ROSE Look at you... 'If you can remember the sixties you weren't really there.' What a smug fucking little thing to say. You didn't change the world, you bought it.

 Privatised it. What did you stand for? Peace? Love? Nothing except being able to do whatever the fuck you wanted.

SANDRA What about our divorce you haven't mentioned that yet, I'd bring that in if I were you.

ROSE Yeah okay – right, Granny and Grandad made an effort. To stay together. For you. But you just... one night. Over. Done. Not even what happened to me made you think about it. You still said you didn't want to be trapped. It's not a trap, it's called responsibility. I don't think Jamie ever got over it all falling apart.

KENNETH Jamie's fine actually. Jamie's perfectly happy. It's you I'm worried about now.

SANDRA So *dramatic*.

ROSE It was dramatic. To me. To both of us. At the time. It was a big fucking deal. I promise you.

SANDRA You must be exhausted.

 Are we having lunch? Or do you want to get to the point?

ROSE My point is you should buy me a house.

KENNETH Why?

ROSE What?

KENNETH Why should we buy you a house?

SANDRA We can't afford it love. Either of us.

KENNETH But even if we could. I'm sorry Rosie, you know we love you, you know we'd do almost anything for you, but there has to come a day when you live your life.

Most of what you're saying has nothing to do with us.

As you said you're nearly forty. You've had opportunities. You've made choices.

Better or worse. No one made you play the violin.

No one made you keep going.

ROSE But you always said what a shame it would be –

KENNETH Why did you listen to us?

We're your parents.

Sandra and me, we never listened to a word our parents said.

Why the hell did you take any notice of what we told you?

You're supposed to rebel.

That's what you're supposed to do.

SANDRA I remember telling my mum to fuck off.

I was seventeen. It was the best moment of my life.

Love, you've never told me to fuck off have you?

ROSE Yes.

SANDRA No.

ROSE You don't hear me.

SANDRA Well then that's the problem.

Isn't it?

ROSE Mum?

SANDRA Darling.

ROSE Fuck off.

Beat.

KENNETH It's your life Rosie.
 It has to be.
 He drinks from the wine.
 We love you.
 But you can't blame us.
 You want us to give up our retirement, our independence,
 our holidays, our security as we get older, you want to take
 all of that away from us and just *give* you a house.

ROSE It's not fair.

KENNETH Life isn't.

ROSE ...

KENNETH I'm surprised you don't know that by now.

ROSE ...

SANDRA

KENNETH Isn't your mother quiet?
 Beat.
 Look, why don't you have a glass of wine and we'll –

SANDRA At least your father and me we never went crawling back to
 our parents.

KENNETH Alright Sandra –

ROSE I'm not crawling

SANDRA Looks like it to me –

KENNETH Sandra –

SANDRA I'm a woman, you don't know what I faced for thirty years
 every place I went to work, we didn't just climb the ladder
 women like me, we made it, we built it all, you don't
 understand the world as it was Rosie, I'm sorry but you have
 no idea –

ROSE It's not just me. Everyone I know has less than their parents did at their age. They're bringing their children up in these little houses, these tiny flats, the best they can afford, while their parents sit on all the money, in huge houses, with big empty rooms. It's disgusting.

SANDRA It's not all about money.

ROSE YES IT IS! IT IS *ALL* ABOUT FUCKING MONEY.

SANDRA I pity you. If that's what you think Rosie. I really pity you.

ROSE Mum. It's simple. Buy me a house.
You can.
Either of you could.
Please.

SANDRA What's this really about?
Darling?

ROSE You're supposed to look after your children.
JAMIE comes in.

JAMIE What's going on? I don't I don't... I can't... I'm getting a headache! The SHOUTING! I'm trying to relax. I can't I can't – I can't I can't –

SANDRA Jamie –
She goes to him, but he deliberately moves away from her, nearer to ROSE and KENNETH.

ROSE Come on Jamie. Jamie, it's alright. We'll go into the garden.

JAMIE What?

ROSE Go for a walk. You can have a smoke. Or, whatever.
We'll catch up yeah.

JAMIE Yeah, right. Yeah.
He looks at her, trusts her.

ROSE

Dad?

Dad.

You understand.

You get what I'm asking.

And you can afford it.

...?

A moment. Is he considering?

Then he looks at her. Hard.

KENNETH

No.

She grabs JAMIE by the hand.

They go.

KENNETH picks up the urn. Looks at it. Then out the window where his children have gone.

SANDRA

I thought our children would be heroes.

I imagined they would soar. Standing on our shoulders I assumed that our kids would reach heights we never imagined, change the world entirely. I thought they would solve the great problems, become prime ministers, scientists, academics.

But look at them. They sit on computers, not living, typing messages about nothing. Watching meaningless videos, and waiting for Friday night, they want to be rich and famous, in fact that's all they want to be, but they never lift a fucking finger.

Do they?

They don't read, they don't work and they don't *think*. They want it all on a plate.

And then strangely when nothing arrives, it's our fault.

What happened?

I thought you're supposed to be proud of your children.

KENNETH *puts the urn down.*

Can we buy her a house?

But no, NO! you're right – Sometimes I go into the garden, you've seen our garden, I go out there and lie on the grass, And I think I haven't done this since I was young. For forty years it's been hard graft. We've worked ourselves to the bone.

Pause.

Top me up Ken.

KENNETH *does.*

Maybe it was me

KENNETH No.

SANDRA I've got a mouth like a train, you know that, I'm a very confident person, maybe I was overbearing.

KENNETH We never went to bed with an argument still hanging.
They weren't unhappy growing up.

SANDRA Our daughter slit her wrists.

KENNETH

SANDRA I still think of it.

I dream of the blood. On the floor.

She might do it again, I still see her as a little girl.

KENNETH She'll be alright.

SANDRA I don't know Ken we've been saying that for twenty years, don't worry, she'll be alright but now she's here saying what she's saying and she's nearly forty and I'm starting to think maybe she's got a point.

Maybe she won't be...

Alright.

Maybe she has wasted her life.

As you said. It isn't fair.

Perhaps we just got lucky.

Pause.

They drink the wine.

KENNETH Have you got a fag?

SANDRA Ken! You don't.

KENNETH Well.

SANDRA Not for years.

KENNETH Well.

They get out cigarettes.

KENNETH *lights one. Then gives it to SANDRA.*

He smiles and lights one himself.

Pause.

They take in the room.

SANDRA What do we do?

KENNETH She knows we love her.

Beat.

She'll calm down, come back.

Beat.

She always does.

Pause.

You alright?

SANDRA

They smoke.

What happened with you and Kerry?

KENNETH She wasn't on my intellectual level.

SANDRA She was fat.

KENNETH Thank you.

SANDRA Well she was you know as well as I do she was rather overweight.

KENNETH *smiles.*

KENNETH You look great.

SANDRA Got a gym at home now. Every day, hour in the gym, Pilates, pool.

KENNETH Got a pool here.

SANDRA I know.

KENNETH I could build a gym too.

SANDRA What?

KENNETH Just saying.

SANDRA I know you.

KENNETH You do.

SANDRA Never just saying. You could *build a gym*.

KENNETH Well I could.

SANDRA What do you mean?

KENNETH *looks at her.*

KENNETH You don't like Clive.

SANDRA I...

KENNETH Come on.

He's fun but –

You don't like him really.

Do you?

She smiles.

He smiles.

A connection.

I want to die with you.

SANDRA That's a big thing to say.

KENNETH I've always said big things.

SANDRA You stop me in my tracks sometimes Kenneth.

They look at each other.

Sometimes I don't think you'll ever end.

The way you look.

You're still –

Your eyes are bright.

They stare at each other.

KENNETH Do you miss me?

SANDRA Clive doesn't dance.

KENNETH Why not?

SANDRA His feet.

KENNETH Never stopped me

SANDRA No. Medically. He has sores.

Beat.

KENNETH We never travelled.

SANDRA Our fair share.

KENNETH I mean the world.

SANDRA Right.

KENNETH We never saw the world together.

SANDRA No.

KENNETH I'm retired now.

SANDRA So I hear.

KENNETH You could leave Clive with a bottle of booze and a nurse. He won't know the difference.

SANDRA

KENNETH I'll sell this place, and off we go, you and me, world tour, whatever we want.

SANDRA What about Rosie?

If we did that, if we spent all our money like that what would she...

What would Jamie do?

What sort of people would that make us?

KENNETH We've worked hard. It's our money.

Sandra...

We're all going to die.

This would make us *alive*.

SANDRA Yes but...

KENNETH *stands and goes to a cupboard.*

He looks through his records.

What are you doing?

Ken?

What are you up to, burrowing around down there?

Ken!

Ken!

He finds a record and puts it on.

'All You Need Is Love' plays.

Oh no.

KENNETH You can dance to this.

SANDRA I'm married.

KENNETH I thought you were the sort of girl that did what she wanted.

SANDRA Ken –

KENNETH Henry said you were a goer.

The song plays. They both glance at the urn.

SANDRA stands up and goes towards KENNETH.

SANDRA Henry knew a good thing when he saw it.

They dance, as before.

It's kind of beautiful, with the sun, and the smoke.

SANDRA and KENNETH kiss.

ROSE enters, looks at them.

ROSE Fuck's sake.

I thought you were divorced.

They smile, turn and look at her, warm – loving.

She cries, then picks up her bag and storms out towards the front door. KENNETH and SANDRA keep on dancing.

JAMIE walks in, sees the smoke and then goes to SANDRA's packet of cigarettes. Lights one, then goes and sits down.

ROSE comes back in.

Okay. I need a lift, to the station.

Can one of you give me a lift?

Mum.

Dad?

Mum.

Dad.

Mum.

Dad.

As the music descends in chaos, fade to black.

Curtain down.

Music continues to madness.

End.

THE ENEMY

The Enemy was first performed as part of Headlong's *Decade* at
Commodity Quay, St Katharine Docks, London, on 1 September 2011. The
cast was as follows:

Kevin Harvey
Samuel James

Director
Set Designer
Costume Designer
Choreographer
Lighting Designer
Composer & Sound Designer
Associate Director
Assistant Director
Technical Sound Design
Casting

Rupert Goold
Miriam Buether
Emma Williams
Scott Ambler
Malcolm Rippeth
Adam Cork
Robert Icke
Nadia Latif
Sebastian Frost
Pippa Ailion

Characters

JOHN

MAN

Note on the Text

(/) means the next speech begins at that point. (–) means the next line interrupts.

(...) at the end of a speech means it trails off. On its own it indicates a pressure, expectation or desire to speak.

A line with no full stop at the end indicates that the next speech follows on immediately.

A speech with no written dialogue indicates a character deliberately remaining silent.

Blank space between speeches in the dialogue indicates a silence equal to the length of the space.

JOHN *is waiting. The MAN approaches him.*

JOHN Hi

MAN Hi

JOHN Okay.

MAN What?

JOHN No no. So you're the...

MAN What?

JOHN You're the one who...

MAN What?

JOHN It's just –

MAN Okay.

JOHN I'm John.

MAN Right.

JOHN They said –

MAN Can I?

JOHN Yeah.

MAN Thanks.

JOHN They said –

MAN What?

JOHN Wait here.

MAN Okay.

JOHN Stay here and he'll find you.

MAN Right.

JOHN He'll find you.
MAN Yeah.
MAN For me.
JOHN Yeah
MAN My family.
JOHN Yeah
MAN My sister.
JOHN Okay
JOHN So you're –
MAN Yeah.
JOHN Him?
MAN Yeah.
JOHN Okay
MAN Okay
JOHN So what's your –
MAN What?
JOHN Your –
MAN I can't –
JOHN Your name
MAN I can't tell you.
JOHN Of course.
MAN Of course not.
JOHN But you're –
MAN Yeah
JOHN The one who –
MAN Yeah.

JOHN Okay.
 Okay.

MAN So what?

JOHN No.

MAN What now?

JOHN I've got

MAN Cos I –

JOHN I've got

MAN Other places.

JOHN No I'm just

MAN Okay

JOHN Nervous.

MAN Why?

JOHN Why am I –

MAN Nervous. Why would you be –

JOHN Be nervous?

MAN Yeah.

JOHN Well –

MAN What?

JOHN It's a big –

MAN What?

JOHN You.

MAN What?

JOHN You're –

MAN What?

JOHN	Him.
MAN	Just a job.
JOHN	I know but –
MAN	Trained.
JOHN	Come on.
MAN	What?
JOHN	You must
MAN	What?
JOHN	Feel it.
MAN	What?
JOHN	Pride.
MAN	No
JOHN	No pride?
MAN	No.
JOHN	Joy.
MAN	Joy?
JOHN	Anger.
MAN	Control.
JOHN	Did you –
MAN	What?
JOHN	Have any –
MAN	Have any?
JOHN	Know any –
MAN	What?
JOHN	Anyone who –
MAN	What?

JOHN	Died.
MAN	Of course.
JOHN	No. But –
MAN	Jesus.
JOHN	On that.
MAN	What?
JOHN	That day.
MAN	Oh.
JOHN	In the –
MAN	The Towers.
JOHN	The Pentagon?
MAN	Yeah.
JOHN	Either.
MAN	Yeah.
JOHN	You did?
MAN	Yeah.
JOHN	Who?
MAN	...
JOHN	Who?
MAN	What?
JOHN	Who was –
MAN	You want...
JOHN	What was –
MAN	A name?
JOHN	No who was he?
MAN	He?

JOHN Your
MAN What?
JOHN Who died.
MAN She
JOHN She?
MAN Yeah.
JOHN Okay.
MAN Yeah.
JOHN What was *she*?
MAN I don't.
JOHN To you.
MAN No.
JOHN To you I mean.
MAN She was –
JOHN A friend?
MAN I don't.
JOHN You knew her
MAN She was good.
JOHN A good –
MAN Yeah.
JOHN A good friend?
MAN Good girl.
JOHN Good girl.
MAN Yeah.

JOHN And you.

You knew her from.

From...

What?

School?

MAN No

JOHN College

MAN No.

JOHN What?

MAN Why?

JOHN Just a

MAN Yeah.

JOHN A friend.

MAN Yeah.

JOHN Not a

MAN No.

JOHN You and

MAN No.

JOHN Her.

MAN No.

JOHN You didn't.

MAN No.

JOHN Ever.

MAN Not your

JOHN Close?

MAN Business.

JOHN You were —

MAN Sarah
JOHN Okay.
MAN That's –
JOHN That's her name.
MAN Yeah
JOHN Yeah.
MAN Pentagon.
JOHN Okay.
MAN Yeah.
JOHN She worked –
MAN She worked in the –
JOHN Yeah. There.
MAN There.
JOHN Yeah.
MAN Okay.
JOHN Yeah.

You didn't...

MAN What?
JOHN Did you ever...
MAN No.
JOHN You and.
MAN No.
JOHN Her?
MAN Stop.
JOHN Cos they'll

MAN	What?
JOHN	Want to know.
MAN	Who?
JOHN	Readers.
MAN	Why?
JOHN	Human.
MAN	What?
JOHN	This is
MAN	Human?
JOHN	All about the
MAN	No.
JOHN	Human side
MAN	Human side
JOHN	All about –
MAN	<i>What?</i>
JOHN	You.
MAN	No.
JOHN	So this.
MAN	Not what I
JOHN	Her.
MAN	No.
JOHN	<i>Sarah.</i>
MAN	No.
JOHN	You loved
MAN	Not the
JOHN	Loved her?

MAN Not the story.
JOHN It is.
MAN The mission.
JOHN No.
MAN That's the
JOHN No.
MAN Story.
JOHN I say.
MAN What?
JOHN I say what's
MAN Tell you
JOHN What's the –
MAN Feeling
JOHN The story and
MAN the gun.
JOHN this.
MAN weather.
JOHN This is
MAN anything
JOHN This *is*.
MAN tactics...
JOHN What they
MAN angle.
JOHN Want to
MAN Shot
JOHN What they want to know.

So.

Sarah?

MAN Sister.

JOHN Oh.

MAN Yeah.

JOHN Not...

MAN No.

JOHN Oh.

MAN Yeah.

JOHN I'm

MAN Okay.

JOHN Sorry.

MAN Yeah.

JOHN But you

MAN What?

JOHN You see?

MAN What?

JOHN That's

MAN Yeah.

JOHN A story.

MAN I get it.

JOHN Guy who

MAN I get it.

JOHN Shot him.

MAN Gets revenge.

JOHN Revenge?
MAN I get it.
JOHN Is that –
MAN What?
JOHN What you...
MAN No.
JOHN Felt.
MAN No.
JOHN Revenge?
MAN No.
JOHN You said.
MAN Your story not –
JOHN Revenge.
MAN Not mine.

JOHN So when you –
 In the
 The
MAN What?
JOHN The moment.
MAN No.
JOHN When you.
MAN No.
JOHN Did it.
MAN No.
JOHN Did she?

MAN No.
JOHN You thought.
MAN No.
JOHN Of her?
MAN Not at all.
JOHN No?
MAN A target. A mission. A target. A shot. No.
JOHN Her face.
MAN What?
JOHN In those.
MAN You don't –
JOHN Those last
MAN Don't care.
JOHN Moments.
MAN Do you?
JOHN Pain.
MAN Jesus.
JOHN Death.
MAN I follow.
JOHN Do you.
MAN Orders.
JOHN Do you?
MAN What?
JOHN Feel?
MAN What? Feel what?

JOHN	Do you feel?
MAN	I'm a guy.
JOHN	Guys feel.
MAN	I know.
JOHN	You do.
MAN	I do.
JOHN	You seem.
MAN	What?
JOHN	Cut off.
MAN	From.
JOHN	Feelings?
MAN	No.
JOHN	Emotions.
MAN	Next.
JOHN	Sarah.
MAN	Next question.
JOHN	Sarah.
MAN	Sarah.
JOHN	Your
MAN	Yeah.
JOHN	Sister, what would she.
MAN	Think?
JOHN	Yeah.
MAN	Of me.
JOHN	Yeah.

MAN	That I'm
JOHN	You're
MAN	The one.
JOHN	Yeah.
MAN	She'd be
JOHN	Yeah.
MAN	Glad.
JOHN	Yeah.
MAN	I'm alive.
JOHN	Okay.
MAN	she always
JOHN	What?
MAN	Said I'd
JOHN	Okay.
MAN	Die.
JOHN	Yeah.
MAN	In war, she said.
JOHN	Yeah.
MAN	War.
JOHN	Right.
MAN	But in the
JOHN	Yeah.
MAN	In the end it was her.
JOHN	Yeah.
MAN	In war.
JOHN	You think?

MAN What?
JOHN That that
MAN What?
JOHN – what happened
MAN You mean
JOHN Was that?
MAN Yeah.
JOHN War?
MAN Looked like it yeah.
 Looked like war to me.

JOHN You're married?
MAN No.
JOHN No.
MAN You?
JOHN What?
MAN Tell me.
JOHN What?
MAN Why this?
JOHN I don't.
MAN Why me?
JOHN You're
MAN Why this?
JOHN Important.
MAN Two years.
JOHN Yeah.

MAN	Two years.
JOHN	Two years yeah.
MAN	To find me.
JOHN	That's right.
MAN	Two years.
JOHN	Yeah.
MAN	Just this.
JOHN	That's right.
MAN	Why?
JOHN	The story.
MAN	Do you care?
JOHN	Do I care?
MAN	Or is it just –
JOHN	The story.
MAN	The man.
JOHN	Yeah.
MAN	Who shot.
JOHN	Yeah.
MAN	Bin Laden.
JOHN	Yeah.
MAN	Some story.
JOHN	Some story.
MAN	You'll be rich.
JOHN	No.
MAN	Famous.
JOHN	Yes.

MAN	Rich.
JOHN	Maybe.
MAN	No maybe.
JOHN	Maybe.
MAN	You will.
JOHN	Okay.
MAN	I want to know.
JOHN	What?
MAN	My question.
JOHN	What?
MAN	To you.
JOHN	What?
MAN	Do you?
JOHN	What?
MAN	Care.
JOHN	Care?
MAN	Yes.
JOHN	About?
MAN	Me. The shot.
JOHN	Yes.
MAN	The man.
JOHN	Of course.
MAN	Bin Laden.
JOHN	Look –
MAN	Revenge.
JOHN	Well

MAN Do you.
JOHN Okay.
MAN Care.
JOHN Okay.
MAN Or is this just.
JOHN Of course.
MAN Is this just the way you –
JOHN I'm American.
MAN Is this just the way you make your mark?

JOHN I'm as American as you.
MAN Not nervous.
JOHN What?
MAN You were –
JOHN What?
MAN Nervous.
JOHN Well –
MAN Not nervous any more.
JOHN You're a
MAN What?
JOHN Seal.
MAN Yeah.
JOHN The best.
MAN Yeah
JOHN Degree
MAN Degree

JOHN	MA
MAN	Yeah.
JOHN	Languages
MAN	Four.
JOHN	Bright.
MAN	The best.
JOHN	So you must
MAN	What?
JOHN	Think.
MAN	Think?
JOHN	Yeah.
MAN	Think...
JOHN	About why?
MAN	What?
JOHN	Why it happened.
MAN	What the
JOHN	Yeah
MAN	The Towers
JOHN	Yeah, the –
MAN	The Pentagon.
JOHN	Yeah.
MAN	Do I know –
JOHN	What do you –
MAN	Why it happened?
JOHN	What do you –
MAN	Is that your –

JOHN No.
MAN Your question?
JOHN Your thoughts.
MAN My...
JOHN Yeah.
MAN My thoughts.
JOHN Yeah...
MAN Why?
JOHN The readers.
MAN The story.
JOHN Unique. Viewpoint.

MAN The things.
JOHN Okay.
MAN The things I believe.
JOHN Yeah.
MAN Are important.
JOHN Okay.

MAN Freedom to think, freedom to act, the rule of law, intellectual development, equality of opportunity, eradication of corruption, a free market, freedom to worship freedom to express your opinion if it does not inhibit other opinions, equality of men, of women, regardless of gender, race, or sexuality, the separation of church and state, the ability of every citizen to vote in free and fair elections to decide their own government, these things don't come free, these things have to be earned with war and blood, it's the only price. They said my sister was killed by the blast as the plane hit the building, they think she died quickly and I don't know I

won't ever know for sure about that, but what I do know is that the man who ordered my sister's death did not want anything I could give him. I know that he was, according to the criteria I've just laid out for you, the enemy. He was the enemy of everything I believe. He was the enemy of everything that allows you to do your job and everything that keeps you safe and gives you life. He ordered the attack as retaliation, yes, but not against bombs or bullets but against music, and movies and sports and life. And my sister loves those things. I didn't kill him because he killed my sister, I didn't kill him because of the country he came from or what he believed, I killed him because I know what the enemy looks like and it had his face.

JOHN Okay.

MAN Okay.

JOHN Thanks.

MAN Yeah.

JOHN Yeah.

MAN You want –

JOHN No.

MAN Anything else?

JOHN No.

MAN Worth it?

JOHN Yeah.

MAN Two years?

JOHN Yeah.

MAN You're gonna be rich.

JOHN Yeah.

MAN With this.

JOHN Yeah.

MAN God bless.

JOHN Yeah.

MAN God bless America yeah?

JOHN Yeah.

MAN God bless America.

JOHN God bless America.

MAN Okay.

He goes.

13 was first performed in the Olivier auditorium of the National Theatre, London, on 18 October 2011. The cast was as follows:

JOHN	Trystan Gravelle
THE TWELVE	
RACHEL	Kirsty Bushell
AMIR	Davood Ghadami
HOLLY	Lara Rossi
EDITH	Helen Ryan
RUTH	Geraldine James
STEPHEN	Danny Webb
SHANNON	Katie Brayben
ZIA	Shane Zaza
MARK	Adam James
SARAH	Genevieve O'Reilly
MARTIN	Nick Blakeley
ROB	Matthew Barker
ALICE	Natasha Broomfield
RUBY	Grace Cooper Milton/ Jadie-Rose Hobson
DENNIS	Nick Sidi
TERRY	John Webber
PAUL	Nick Blakeley
ESTHER	Barbara Kirby
LIAM	John Webber
CAROL	Sioned Jones
SIR CHRISTOPHER	Martin Chamberlain
FIONA	Zara Tempest-Walters
SALLY	Esther McAuley

All other parts played by members of the company

<i>Director</i>	Thea Sharrock
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Designer

Lighting Designer

Music

Movement Director

Sound Designer

Tom Scutt

Mark Henderson

Adrian Johnston

Steve Kirkham

Ian Dickinson

Characters

JOHN

THE TWELVE

AMIR

EDITH

HOLLY

MARK

MARTIN

RACHEL

ROB

RUTH

SARAH

SHANNON

STEPHEN

ZIA

ALICE

CAROL

DENNIS

ESTHER

FIONA

LIAM

PAUL

RUBY

SALLY

SIR CHRISTOPHER

TERRY

BUSKER

HECKLER

PEOPLE IN THE PARK

PROTESTERS

RIOT POLICE

OTHER POLICE

PASSERSBY

VARIOUS CROWDS

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE ALPHA GROUP

Note on the Text

The play should be performed with a circle.

Although the scenes are numbered separately, they should flow continuously.

(/) means the next speech begins at that point. (–) means the next line interrupts.

(...) at the end of a speech means it trails off. On its own it indicates a pressure, expectation or desire to speak.

A line with no full stop at the end indicates that the next speech follows on immediately.

ACT ONE

One

Darkness.

Laurie Anderson's 'Someone Else's Dream' plays... the whole song. Some light.

We see twelve people asleep in bed. A little more light...

The twelve suddenly wake up.

AMIR, RACHEL, HOLLY, ZIA, SHANNON, STEPHEN, RUTH, SARAH, EDITH, MARK, MARTIN and ROB. All petrified. Disturbed.

An alarm clock flashing. 7.13 a.m.

JOHN enters.

Two

JOHN is standing with a travelling bag.

Everyone clears except SARAH who's joined by RUBY. RUBY drags her own small case, takes her mother's hand. SARAH checks her emails, they wait for a taxi. RUBY stares at JOHN.

JOHN smiles at her. Then looks back out front. RUBY continues to stare. SARAH notices.

SARAH Ruby...

Ruby...

Ruby!

RUBY What?

SARAH Don't stare. (To JOHN.) I'm sorry.

RUBY He smells.

SARAH Ruby! (*To JOHN.*) I do apologise.

RUBY He smells bad.

SARAH She's isn't normally like this.

RUBY I am.

SARAH She's not been sleeping.

RUBY I have, I'm just precocious. It's you Mom. You never sleep any more.

SARAH Ruby! (*To JOHN.*) I get bad dreams. I tried to sleep on the plane –

RUBY Mom?

SARAH But when I did –

RUBY Where's Dad?

SARAH When I did, I...

A moment. SARAH stares at JOHN. He looks at her for the first time.

 Oh.

 DENNIS *enters with the bags.*

DENNIS Hey! Munchkin! What's up?

SARAH Mum's weird.

DENNIS What?

SARAH She's being rude again.

DENNIS Come on sweetie! It was a long flight, I know, but we're back home now.

SARAH This isn't home. This is Britain.

DENNIS You like Britain.

SARAH No I don't. *Britain?*

She looks at JOHN.

Britain's ugly.

Three

RUBY, DENNIS *and* SARAH *clear and the stage is charged by a group of protesters and policemen. They clash – shouting. Banners saying ‘No fees!’, ‘We won’t pay!’*

SHANNON *enters hovering, listening to her iPod. AMIR, one of the protesters, is arguing with a POLICEMAN, both on megaphones. People film it.*

CROWD We won't pay! We won't pay!

POLICEMAN Get back!

AMIR We're allowed / to be here!

POLICEMAN Back! / Now!

AMIR This is a / peaceful protest.

POLICEMAN Get back!

AMIR I'm not pushing! You're acting / aggressively! This is a –

POLICEMAN Fuck you –

The POLICEMAN pushes AMIR. AMIR pushes back. The tussle continues as...

Four

RUTH *arrives in her office with three advisers – MARTIN, LIAM and CAROL. SHANNON hovers. MARTIN yawns, loudly.*

RUTH If you're flagging Martin, I'd get some coffee.

MARTIN I'm fine.

RUTH National Insurance and income tax, that's a conversation we haven't had, where's Andrew?

LIAM What?

RUTH Liam is this skirt working?

LIAM Er...

MARTIN Andrew's at the conference.

RUTH I'm sorry?

CAROL The skirt's good, Prime Minister.

MARTIN In Brussels!

CAROL It goes with the jacket!

RUTH What?!

MARTIN Brussels!

CAROL Jacket!

RUTH Excuse me! Do you have to do that now?

 SHANNON *looks up, leaving the Hoover on.*

SHANNON Oh hi! You alright?

RUTH What?!

SHANNON Well – Not being funny but you look a bit...

She does a face.

RUTH I couldn't sleep.

SHANNON Bad dreams?

RUTH What?

SHANNON Me too. It's the weather. Makes you sweat like a horse.

CAROL Prime Minister –

RUTH Look can you do this tomorrow please... er...

SHANNON Shannon.

RUTH Sharon

SHANNON Shannon.

RUTH Just switch it off. Alright?

SHANNON, *slightly offended, switches off the Hoover. We hear the protest outside.*

What is it this morning?

LIAM Student fees.

RUTH ...still on that? – Thanks Sharon.

SHANNON Shannon

RUTH They've started early.

LIAM Haven't we all?

SHANNON I didn't vote for you.

She goes.

RUTH Can she work here?

MARTIN What?

RUTH If she didn't vote for me.

MARTIN As a cleaner, she's technically a civil servant. She can vote for whoever she likes.

RUTH Carol's a civil servant.

MARTIN Yes.

RUTH Well did Carol vote for me?

They all look at CAROL, who's suddenly on the spot. Fortunately for her, EDITH walks past, grabs a trolley and pushes it through a bank window, then runs off.

The police run towards the noise... RUTH despairs.

Martin – Tell them to get that under control. I've got a headache.

Five

The police grab hold of RACHEL, who is near the window.

RACHEL Hey!

AMIR Get off her!

He grabs the trolley and hurls it at a police officer, who falls to the ground. AMIR's then jumped on and arrested. As this happens...

Six

...STEPHEN walks through, to give a lecture to some students at a London university.

STEPHEN At least some of you have bothered to turn up. I'm Stephen Crossley, and today I want to talk about God.

The police charge, scattering the protest, as JOHN walks centre-stage. People walking past...

I have here a box. Inside is the Lord Almighty himself. You have a choice. Do you open it?

If you do, you will look God in the face, and know for certain his existence, dimensions, his absolute power and glory. But unfortunately, once that moment has happened, you will then burn in his omnipotence and omniscience. Your free independent life destroyed, you will be gone forever.

Therefore, perhaps you think it's better that you don't open the box. Instead you live a life of horror and worship, always under the power of what might lie inside, waiting for you, in the dark.

So. Do you open it? Do you stare God in the face? Or shy away.

*People in suits, tourists, walk past. HOLLY on her phone.
SHANNON coming home from work.*

For me. Every time, turn on the lights, open the box – face
the truth. Because when you do...

He opens it. Nothing.

There's nothing there. Never is.

Seven

ALICE *enters with MARK. A BUSKER sets up nearby... his head is down,
we can't see his face.*

MARK A toothbrush, a new shirt and a double espresso. What's his
name?

ALICE Mr Hamidi.

MARK And what's his thing?

ALICE His thing?

MARK Yeah. What's his –

ALICE I have literally no idea what you're talking about.

MARK What's he *done*?

ALICE *I don't know.*

MARK Alright, look –

ALICE If you mean what's he *accused* of then maybe I have some –

MARK Oh for Christ's sake.

ALICE You're a lawyer Mark. What he's *done* is a question for the
jury.

MARK Alice, as you rightly say, I'm a lawyer. What are you?

ALICE I'm good with words. Warwick University, excellent degree.

MARK 2.2

ALICE So I had a good time.

MARK A toothbrush, a new shirt and a double espresso.

ALICE (*Giving him the file.*) Assault of a police officer.

MARK Okay. Give me an hour then burst in, say you need me. Say I've got another meeting, it's an emergency, my brother's ill –

ALICE You don't have a brother.

MARK Alice, just get me out of there – I'm not at my best

ALICE I'll say. What happened? You're *late*. You're never late.

MARK ...the train.

ALICE And your clothes.

MARK My clothes, Alice don't go there, Yellow jumpers, trainers, leggings, you're supposed to be at work.

ALICE That's my thing, my style but you're normally so *fastidious*.

MARK I had bad dreams okay –

ALICE *Punctilious* – Oh! A nightmare? Wow! Were there monsters?

MARK Monsters yep. Can we –

ALICE An explosion?

MARK Yes... an explosion... monsters – why? Did you have the same thing?

The BUSKER plays notes on his guitar...

ALICE The same?

MARK The same *dream*.

ALICE Yes I did!

MARK That's weird.

ALICE I know.

MARK Really?

ALICE Yeah.

MARK *Really?*

Beat. The BUSKER pauses for a moment, lifts his head up – a strange expression – deep, depressed... then continues...

ALICE No! Course I didn't have the same dream, I don't remember dreams. I spent the night with my boyfriend.

MARK Lionel.

ALICE Leon. We had lots of sex.

MARK He's a big chap right?

ALICE Absolutely he's a big chap yes.

MARK I meant fat.

ALICE I meant his cock.

MARK You're odd.

ALICE I'm alternative.

MARK Get my things.

ALICE Go to your meeting.

MARK What's his name again?

ALICE Amir Hamidi.

ALICE goes. MARK has a searing headache. He leaves, just as...

Eight

...RACHEL *enters on the phone.*

RACHEL Amir Hamidi. Amir. Hamidi, he's been arrested, no I don't want to hold I've been holding already don't you dare

fucking put me on hold okay if you transfer me or move me or do anything with me I'll scream I'll call you back and just scream down the phone or something – all I want to know is where he is and you're going to find out and tell me now yes? Now. That's what you're going to do. So.

Hello? Hello?!

They've hung up. She screams, throws her phone away in anger – JOHN catches it.

JOHN Rachel?

The busker stops playing. RACHEL looks at JOHN.

RACHEL Oh God.

God...

John? How can...

She looks at him. Hits him.

We thought you were dead.

She hugs him. Tight.

Nine

A meeting in Number 10. RUTH and DENNIS shake hands.

RUTH Mr Harrison. Your reputation precedes you.

DENNIS Thank you Prime Minister. Please call me Dennis.

RUTH Did you have any trouble getting here, through the crowd?

DENNIS No, they threw some eggs but –

RUTH Well you can't make an omelette.

A tiny beat.

DENNIS I'm sorry?

RUTH It's an expression – you can't make an omelette without –

DENNIS I can –

RUTH Okay –

DENNIS I can make an omelette, I'm pretty good –

RUTH What?

DENNIS Two eggs, cheese, mushrooms.

RUTH Ah. You're joking.

DENNIS Yeah.

RUTH Ha ha.

DENNIS Thought I'd break the ice.

RUTH This isn't official is it? This visit?

DENNIS No Prime Minister. If it were official you'd be talking to the Ambassador. The President felt perhaps if the two of us were to speak instead it would be more... informal.

RUTH Well he's right so far. I'm told you have the President's ear. Apparently you go way back.

DENNIS Way back yeah.

RUTH The President's an interesting man, Dennis. I thought we were getting on and there was mutual respect, but recently – nothing. Suddenly there's silence. And that's not on.

DENNIS He's a busy man. That's the Ambassador's message.

RUTH I know that's the Ambassador's message but no one likes the Ambassador, no one tells him anything. I assume the President sent you informally like this because he knows I've had enough of the *message* and at last you're going to give me a *reason*.

She smiles. DENNIS likes her.

DENNIS It's Iran. The talks. The President hopes the Iranians will believe there is distance between our two countries. He

doesn't want it to seem like we're secretly building a coalition to invade.

RUTH We're not.

DENNIS Not yet. Right now he's still in the 'extending the hand of peace' stage. He's talking about new global alliances. But if that fails the old alliances will be as important as ever. So what I'm saying is, you're right, there is silence, but you can read something into it.

RUTH

DENNIS The silence contains an implicit friendship. He can't articulate that friendship or it would defeat the point.

RUTH That's why you're here.

DENNIS That's right.

RUTH You're asking for patience.

DENNIS Yes.

RUTH Faith.

DENNIS Exactly. Yes. Yes Prime Minister. Have faith.

RUTH

DENNIS When the talks are over, it'll be the special-est relationship we've ever had. Press opportunities, private conversations. Whatever you need, you get, but at the moment things between Britain and America have to seem... cold.

The talks are working. We stand a chance of averting the inevitable. And that's rare. No one wants a war.

Beat. RUTH smiles.

RUTH Alright. Tell the President he has my support.

DENNIS Thank you.

RUTH For now.

DENNIS Understood.

RUTH And you'll keep me updated.

DENNIS Yes we'll make sure we –

RUTH No. You. Dennis. You're the President's man, I think you know what's going on better than anyone, so you'll keep me updated, you'll be on the phone all the time, here when I need you, as long as this goes on. That's the price for my patience. Okay?

 DENNIS *smiles.*

DENNIS Okay.

RUTH Good. Martin will show you out.

 DENNIS *goes.*

Ten

...RACHEL *walks in front of JOHN, angry.*

RACHEL He's been arrested, we were out protesting and got into a fight and they took him off. I don't know where he is. And you know, then you're just... standing there looking like a fucking – How did you know I'd be here?

JOHN I didn't.

RACHEL Where did you go? Why did you leave us? Don't *smile* don't – We have things to deal with John big fucking things hanging in the air the air is thick right now with this – don't think we're friends –

JOHN It's good to see you.

RACHEL I'd forgotten but it's coming back quickly how annoying you can be.

JOHN You and Amir. Still together.

RACHEL Yeah we are. Still together. Yeah.

Beat. She looks at him – so?

JOHN What are you up to?

RACHEL Huh! Okay – Yeah John – let's catch up, let's sit down and have a proper good old chat about how things were and where we are now and what's gone on. So I'll start – Amir was working as a lecturer which was nice but then they lost funding, shut the department so now he's miserable as fuck and as for me, well, I was doing my PhD but gave it up cos one of us had to earn something. So now I have a job. I work for a charity. Women's rights in developing countries.

JOHN Your sort of thing.

RACHEL I sit on the phone and call people up and ask them for money.

JOHN Like sales.

RACHEL It's begging. So! What about you John? What have you been *up to recently?*

Beat.

JOHN Things are difficult.

RACHEL That's perceptive of you yes difficult is a word that's a good word to describe it literally every day I get a call, an email, this person's ill, that one's depressed, I'm a walking Samaritan people think I can deal with their problems but for some reason they never imagine I might have some of my own cos I'm not sleeping at the moment.

JOHN Bad dreams?

RACHEL No not bad, horrific, if you want the truth, which I remember you always did – so why did you go then? Leave us. How could you? No one understood it.

Beat.

JOHN There's a Starbucks over there. I need to wash. I'll sort myself out, come back in a minute? Alright?

She looks at him.

RACHEL You'll come back?

He smiles and turns to go.

John?

He looks at her.

I'm glad you're not dead.

Eleven

AMIR *is sat at a table. MARK walks in.*

MARK I'm Mark, your solicitor.

AMIR You?

MARK Yeah.

AMIR I've changed my mind. I'm pleading guilty.

MARK Look, I don't want to be here either mate, but you phoned your girlfriend, she called your dad, he checked the Yellow Pages, and here I am, underpaid, overqualified, you might as well use me. I'm really good.

AMIR You're a wanker mate.

MARK What's the charge?

AMIR Those papers, doesn't it say?

MARK Can I make a confession?

AMIR Okay.

MARK I haven't read the papers.

AMIR Fuck's sake.

MARK I *know*. I haven't read them. What a *dick*. So. The charge.

AMIR I was protesting, and this police officer was kicking my girlfriend so I got this trolley and sort of pushed it at them. One of them goes down and I'm like shit. We weren't being violent, it was them, one of them calls me Al-Qaeda, he's swearing all of that, and I'm trying to stay out of it but –

MARK What were you protesting against?

AMIR Student fees.

MARK Aren't you a bit old for that?

AMIR I was a lecturer. I got fired.

MARK Well you should be all in favour then. Bit more money in the system you can keep your job.

Over the next speech, MARK's nose slowly starts bleeding.

I had a great time at university. Parents paid for it of course. And I got in just before they started charging so *ker-ching*. What do you want instead then? What's your alternative?

AMIR A graduate tax would be more / successful in –

MARK Yeah but that's the same thing. You pay as tax, you pay off a loan, doesn't make any difference. Either you want properly funded universities or you don't. It's a competitive world these days. India. China. We're on the way down.

AMIR Oh – you've got –

MARK I just think it's funny that essentially you're protesting because they *called it the wrong thing*. You got into a *fight* – I thought you must really mean this stuff but no, you're just unemployed and pissed off. Anyway. We can get you out of it, if you say the right things.

AMIR Your nose is bleeding.

MARK What?

AMIR There's a whole load of blood coming out of your nose.

MARK smiles, then puts his hand to his nose.

MARK Shit...

AMIR Is it stress?

MARK What?

AMIR Or coke?

MARK No. AMIR

MARK ...

AMIR You want to go and sort yourself out.

Twelve

Thirteen members of an Alpha course enter and sit in a semicircle.

HOLLY's with them but a bit mistrustful. SALLY is the leader.

SALLY So in this half, I thought I might ask a few questions of those who have contributed a little less so far. Holly! Maybe you could tell us what brought you here and what you hope to get out of these sessions?

HOLLY Er yeah. So I want something good to happen? Cos my dad's a shit, and my mum gets anxious, about things? And I'm not liking university cos I haven't got any money or... well, friends. I don't know why, I'm a good person I think but anyway my gran, she goes to this church and I was telling her and she said I should try the Alpha course cos you only work out what you want to do in life when you know what your core beliefs are so...

SALLY Alright. Terry – perhaps the same question to you.

TERRY Well, I suppose it was my ex-girlfriend who first –

HOLLY Okay wait you ask me this big question then we move on? I thought we were here to talk?

SALLY We are, and it was important to hear that Holly but –

HOLLY I was opening up. I was answering.

SALLY And I appreciate that but –

PAUL You know sometimes the questions are more important than the answers.

HOLLY What?

PAUL Sometimes the *questions* are more important than the *answers*.

HOLLY What does that mean?

SALLY It's a very good point and worth considering, for all of us. Maybe real belief isn't about facts, certainties, *answers*. It's questions, possibilities. Who are we?

What are we doing here?

HOLLY I'm definitely starting to ask what I'm doing here.

SALLY Terry do carry on.

TERRY My ex-girlfriend had this dress and –

HOLLY But it is about certainties. It all is.

SALLY Holly –

HOLLY There's one God, original sin, Jesus, the Trinity, Heaven, Hell. Those aren't questions, they're given as facts.

SALLY You sound very familiar with Christianity –

HOLLY My dad was a priest.

SALLY I thought you said your dad was a shit.

HOLLY Bible in one hand, bottle in the other.

They're all quiet for a moment, intimidated, HOLLY presses on...

I have trouble believing in any of it. Why would God let me be born into a fucked-up family with no money and a shit

life when I've done nothing, absolutely *nothing*, to deserve it?

A moment.

ESTHER Can I say something?

SALLY Esther – of course.

ESTHER It seems to me Holly. Holly, is that your name?

HOLLY Been here all afternoon *Esther* –

ESTHER It seems to me that God allows us freedom to make *our own* decisions. Yes? If you're having difficulty and torment in your life maybe that's more about your *attitude*? Your *approach*.

PAUL But, to be fair to Holly, it's a big question that every Christian struggles with. If there's an all-powerful, all-loving God, why is there evil in the world?

ESTHER And that's what we're here for, to ask those big questions.

SALLY Yes, Esther, that's right exactly.

HOLLY So what's the answer?

Beat.

ESTHER Well...

HOLLY Yeah and here's another big question – Why did Jesus turn up then? Right then? He could've freed the African slaves, or stopped Hitler killing the Jews, but no, he came to Earth at that point and did a few small miracles. He could actually come down right now, do some miracles today, help us all out with the climate, money, terrorism, we could do with that but I don't see him anywhere.

PAUL Well, Jesus never claimed to *solve* / our problems.

SALLY So you're basically saying you don't believe in God.

HOLLY What?

SALLY That's what your questions imply.

PAUL Er... Sally, I don't think that is what she –
SALLY That's what *all* your questions imply.
PAUL Maybe we should / take another break?
SALLY This is a Christian group, a Christian discussion group –
HOLLY I know. It's a discussion group and we're / discussing it.
SALLY I'm in charge of how it runs and I want to make it
constructive, and open but you're just – You're just sat there
and –
She starts crying. PAUL comforts her.
PAUL It's alright. Hey... Hey...
SALLY Sorry but she's... I know she probably doesn't understand,
but she's horrible – Terry. It's your turn. I want to hear from
Terry.
Terry! Say something! Please!
Pause. TERRY isn't sure. The pressure is huge.
TERRY Sometimes I hear voices.
They all look at him. A moment.
HOLLY Wow.
ESTHER *turns to HOLLY, sweetly.*
ESTHER Holly?
Look...
Maybe you should just fuck off?
*HOLLY grabs her bag and goes. EDITH starts practising
the piano.*

Thirteen

RUTH *is making a speech.*

RUTH It's tough for everyone at the moment so I think some plain speaking is called for. I'm not an old Etonian, I'm not one of the boys. My father was a postman, my mother a primary school teacher. I've come a long way, and I'm proud. Under my leadership, the Conservative Party has modernised, root and branch. Just as Labour grew up from outdated socialism, so we have moved on from the days of Thatcher. We get, now, the importance of the NHS, of comprehensive schools, of a state which looks after people. We don't hold up the *market* as a solution to everything, but unlike many currently in opposition, we're also not frightened of it. We stand for opportunity. We want people to get on and I promise you we'll get this economy back on track – this time through hard work, not gambling and speculation. This time through enterprise and getting out there and getting it done.

That's what I'm all about. Nothing was ever handed to me on a plate. I like hard work. Every minute. Every hour. To make this country great again. That's what you voted for. That's what you're going to get. Okay? Hard work!

She smiles. Cheering as...

Fourteen

... RUBY *runs on and sits at a table. SARAH brings dinner over and she eats.*

RUBY I prefer it when Amelia cooks.

SARAH You're so lucky Ruby

RUBY I know.

SARAH Most children don't have a cook.

RUBY I know but I do have a cook and I prefer her food to yours.

SARAH Some children don't even have a mommy.

RUBY What does that mean? Is that a threat?

SARAH No. A threat? Of course it's not a threat.

RUBY You have food you like and don't like. The cook's a professional, you're not. It makes sense that I prefer her food. I'm allowed to express my opinion.

SARAH I'm saying you should be grateful.

RUBY To who?

SARAH That you have food and shelter at all.

RUBY *Thanks Mom.*

SARAH Not to me Ruby, not to us, grateful you were born into such a well-off background in the first place.

RUBY You mean grateful to God.

SARAH Yes, absolutely. Grateful to God.

RUBY I don't believe in God.

SARAH I beg your pardon?

RUBY When you say grace, I don't shut my eyes, I just wait for you to stop.

Beat.

SARAH Ruby, you should be careful.

RUBY What do you mean?

SARAH It's.

 It's

 It's all a matter of responsibility is what I'm saying sweetheart, beliefs come with responsibilities. You can't just sit there and say something like that, something like 'I don't believe in God' you have to have a philosophical basis for it, you have to be able to justify it.

RUBY I can believe what I like.

SARAH Where do you get this from? It's not me certainly, it's not your father.

RUBY I read a book.

SARAH When you open your mouth and these things come out – it's not the Ruby I like.

RUBY I appreciate a multiplicity of voices in my life rather than simply relying on my parents.

SARAH What book?

RUBY I read lots of books.

SARAH *What book?*

RUBY *Fairytale God* by Dr Stephen Crossley.

Pause.

SARAH I would really appreciate it, Ruby, if as a favour to me, you ate your chicken.

RUBY *reluctantly does.*

RUBY You were shouting last night.

SARAH What?

RUBY You were shouting in your sleep. God. God! Help me. Save us! Save us!

SARAH It was a bad dream.

RUBY That's what religion is.

SARAH What *are* you?

RUBY Just a *bad dream*.

Fifteen

AMIR *walks with RACHEL from the interview room.*

RACHEL He said it was a coincidence.

AMIR I don't believe in coincidence.

RACHEL Neither do I but there he was.

AMIR Didn't you say like what the fuck?

RACHEL Of course but he wouldn't tell me. He asked about these dreams – anyway then when we found out where you were and when we got here, he marched straight up to the desk and I don't know what he said but after a couple of minutes they let you out – I mean actually of all people he was the one we needed but –

AMIR Is he alright?

RACHEL What do you mean?

AMIR He's not ill, or –

RACHEL No he's not ill, he's just the same, he's... John.

They've arrived at JOHN. AMIR looks at him.

JOHN looks at AMIR. Smiles.

JOHN You're okay?

AMIR Yeah.

JOHN You look good.

AMIR Thanks.

MARK enters with a tissue.

MARK I go to the bathroom to sort myself out, when I come back they tell me you've been let off. What happened?

AMIR John got me out.

MARK John? Okay. This is John. And he's what? A friend? A wizard?

JOHN I asked them if they were going to press charges.

MARK They hadn't pressed charges?

JOHN Did you check?

MARK Well, I assumed since his daddy was willing to pay –

JOHN They didn't have any evidence. It's good. He's out. What's the problem?

MARK *looks at them.*

MARK Nothing.

JOHN You wanted to help him.

MARK Help him? No. Sorry. Heart of stone. I'm very happy he's out of my life. Fucking over the... you know...

AMIR Moon?

MARK *Rainbow.* Seriously. Can do without it.

JOHN Is that a latte?

MARK Cappuccino.

JOHN I haven't had a cappuccino in ages. Do you mind?

JOHN *He takes it and drinks.*

JOHN You look tired.

MARK Don't look so great yourself –

JOHN Bad dreams?

MARK I'm *sorry?*

JOHN Monsters. Darkness. What did you say Rachel? Something moving? An explosion? What's your name?

MARK Mark

JOHN Mark.

JOHN *gives the coffee back.*

JOHN How did you sleep last night?

MARK takes the coffee – looks at JOHN. Unsure for a second.

MARK Have you been talking to Alice?

JOHN Who's Alice?

ALICE enters, out of breath. MARK looks straight at JOHN.

ALICE Oh! Mark! There you are! You've got to come right now because something really terrible has happened to your... er... brother... he's really... dead... what?

MARK Come on.

MARK leaves. ALICE follows. RACHEL and AMIR look at JOHN. He smiles.

AMIR You're alright?

JOHN Yes.

AMIR Cos we thought since you never called us or told us anything, we assumed there must be something wrong with you.

JOHN

AMIR

RACHEL You know what we did?

AMIR Rach, give it a minute – let's find somewhere to –

RACHEL No I'm going to tell him right now actually – the morning you'd first gone no one knew anything but we assumed you'd turn up but then there was another day and the next day and course the assumption was that eventually you'd come back but once it was months and then years it was like, how long do we keep on waiting?

JOHN I'm sorry if it was / difficult.

RACHEL Too late. So in the end we had a funeral. Me, him, and whatever other people remembered who you were and cared

which by then it wasn't many if we're honest but we got together and said goodbye cos we thought he has to be dead because if he *isn't* dead then we don't know him at all. Doing that to us. So we said goodbye and we buried you, didn't we?

AMIR Yeah.

Beat.

JOHN Do you want to come out? Tonight. I haven't been out in a long time.

RACHEL No, of course we don't want to come *out*. John –

AMIR It's been a long day.

JOHN Of course. I'll see you later then. Is it alright to stay with you?

RACHEL For how long? I don't see why –

AMIR Yeah, it's okay.

JOHN Thank you.

He turns to go.

RACHEL What are you going to do? Do you even have any money?

JOHN I'm fine.

RACHEL You want to borrow some?

JOHN No. I'll be fine. Thanks though.

And he's gone.

Sixteen

HOLLY *is with* EDITH. EDITH *is giving her some money.*

EDITH How much do you need? Thirty?

There. Have a nice time. Just this once.

HOLLY Thanks Gran.

EDITH Yes. Go for your life. No regrets. You're young.

HOLLY Yeah.

EDITH You've always got to remember in life, the most important thing... The most important thing you'll ever learn...

HOLLY What?

EDITH ...

Oh! Look at you. Holly! Dressed up. Lovely. You're going out tonight?

HOLLY Yeah.

EDITH Are you alright for money?

HOLLY No... Gran... it's...

EDITH How much do you need love?

HOLLY *looks at* EDITH.

HOLLY Thirty?

EDITH Alright.

There. Just this once. Have a nice time.

She goes into her handbag, gives her thirty quid, HOLLY takes it, and goes. EDITH plays on the piano and it becomes music under the next scene.

Seventeen

RUTH *is having a drink with* STEPHEN.

STEPHEN I don't mind admitting, I was surprised. You told me you've started praying again, so I just assumed this would be it. But I listened to every word and once again, no God.

RUTH People don't want to hear what I believe, it's about what I think.

STEPHEN People want you to be honest.

RUTH About my judgement, my views on the world.

STEPHEN And your belief in God informs that of course it does, and if your belief informs your decisions it's dishonest not to mention it in a speech on standards, it's actually anti-democratic.

RUTH This was supposed to be a relaxing evening for me.
One night off in two months, I think what shall I do? I know, I'll get Stephen round, he's a laugh.

STEPHEN Ignore me Ruth – keep doing whatever you're doing because you're loved. The masses trust you, and vox populi vox dei.

RUTH You think Latin's sexy don't you?

STEPHEN Latin's wise. Greek is sexy. I can explain your success Ruth. You are your work. You're a woman of the people, for the people. I mean it's a strain for you from minute to minute I'm sure, but your greatest strength?

RUTH Enlighten me.

STEPHEN No husband. No children.

RUTH Thank God my son is dead and my husband left me, how lucky am I?

STEPHEN You've got nothing to fight for except your country. It's like you're a priest. No commitments, distractions, you're married to us. People like that. Thatcher was the same.

RUTH Thatcher had kids.

STEPHEN But she didn't give a shit about them. The public think men are better at detachment. Separating their work decisions from their home life.

RUTH That's rubbish.

STEPHEN Well you don't have a home life.

RUTH I do, I get in, I put the television on.

STEPHEN Friends?

RUTH Never seen it.

STEPHEN *Do you have any friends?*

RUTH Of course.

STEPHEN Who?

RUTH You're a friend.

STEPHEN Who else?

RUTH ...Oh Stephen I don't have time.

STEPHEN Don't worry. You'll manage with the two of us. Me and Uncle Pinot. We'll be there for support when you need it.

He tops up her wine.

And you will. In the next few months you're going to need all the support you can get.

RUTH I've got support. You said, I'm popular –

STEPHEN Personally. You're going to need solid personal back-up when you're sending other people's children to their death.

Beat.

RUTH Let's talk about something else. How's your sex life?

STEPHEN My sex life?

RUTH Or something, *anything*, I don't know!

STEPHEN Currently my sex life is tepid. How's yours?

RUTH Like a mammoth.

STEPHEN Woolly?

RUTH Extinct.

STEPHEN Must be tricky for a woman like you.

RUTH Sometimes I get so horny I have to go for a walk.
 The music changes to a club beat – throbbing noise...

STEPHEN What's this?

RUTH I don't know. Radio must've retuned itself. It's one of these digital ones, sometimes it just does its own thing.

STEPHEN You still dance?

RUTH What? No.

STEPHEN I remember as a student you dancing so hard you knocked the rector's teeth out.

RUTH He got in my way.
 No. After Simon died, I never saw the point.
 The music and momentum builds... builds...
 I'm not sleeping at the moment Stephen. That's the problem.
 Every night, this dream...

Eighteen

People are dancing – the people of London, out on the town – drunk and letting go. It's tribal and free and open. Full-hearted shouting and release. The student party after the protest maybe, or a dream, a memory... It builds and builds and then... with a ripping... voice and voices... the world explodes... white light – a nuclear blast and then...

Blackout.

ACT TWO

One

The same music as before: Laurie Anderson's 'Someone Else's Dream'.

Then it's cut short –

The twelve awake in bed, as before. Terrified. Breathing. A terrible vision.

Bright light – the alarm going – 7.13 a.m.

Two

Everyone clears except JOHN reading on an iPad, MARK making coffee and RUTH with a cup of coffee. CAROL reads from a paper, bored, annoyed...

CAROL The thirteen steps is... a paragraph of the Final Document of the 2000 review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It provides a set of... 'practical steps for the systematic and progressive efforts to implement Article VI', which is the part of the –

A big sigh.

– treaty that provides for nuclear disarmament. So... that's what you need to know when it comes to Iran. The thirteen steps are the proof that we've... er... made an effort.

RUTH What's the matter Carol?

CAROL It's rather early.

RUTH Well no rest for the wicked.

CAROL I wouldn't know.

Beat.

RUTH What are they? Specifically. The thirteen steps.
CAROL You want all of them?
RUTH Of course. Is it long?
CAROL Well there's thirteen of them.
RUTH We'll do it in the car.
CAROL The Foreign Secretary's in the car. You asked to see him this morning?
RUTH Alright. Good. Bring my coffee. We'll test him.
She goes with her BlackBerry. CAROL picks up her coffee and follows.

Three

JOHN *is in AMIR and RACHEL's flat. AMIR hasn't slept – he's slightly wild, fidgeting, restless...*

AMIR I don't want to sleep. I stay up, putting it off, but eventually you do and there's figures in the dark, this *feeling*, something horrific – thousands of voices, insects. And I'm there with Rachel, in the dream and something terrible's about to happen, there's an explosion and then we wake up, facing each other, screaming. Every night.

JOHN I'm sorry.

AMIR How can it be both of us? Exactly the same thing? Do you get them?

JOHN No.
He looks at AMIR.
What are you doing today?

AMIR I've got some job applications I'm supposed to fill in, and eventually I have to sign on... I don't know...

He sits on the sofa.

Yesterday was this big moment, we all went out, an early start, we were like ‘get it back on the agenda, in the headlines’ – but then you get there and the turnout’s not as many as you think, the police are aggressive and then everything that happened and you come home and you just *know* you haven’t made any difference at all.

They just sit up there in that fucking building and they really – I really don’t think they give a shit.

He switches on his laptop.

JOHN I thought you were going out?

AMIR *shrugs.*

I need a box.

AMIR What kind of a box? A cardboard box?

JOHN Probably needs to be wood. It might rain. I suppose no one has wooden boxes any more do they?

AMIR What for? We’ve got a bucket?

JOHN That’ll do.

AMIR Under the sink. Why? What are you doing?

JOHN I’m going to the park.

AMIR Why?

JOHN You should come along.

AMIR What are you doing?

JOHN *looks at him.*

HOLLY *walks towards MARK’s breakfast table, wearing a dressing gown with hood up.*

JOHN Come with me.

AMIR *looks at him for a second – Then –*

AMIR Nah. I'm tired. I'll just stay here.
JOHN *looks at him and goes.*

Four

MARK *comes up to the breakfast table.*

MARK Thank God you're alive, I thought I might've actually
 fucked you to death. Good way to go. As long as you orgasm
 first. Can you imagine having a heart attack before you
 come? Coffee?

HOLLY takes off her hood.

Jesus. Some girls look great first thing, no make-up, fuzzy
hair, some girls look really sexy in the morning. But you?
Not so much.

He gives her the coffee.

HOLLY I didn't mean to sleep over – but it was late...

MARK It's fine. Like having a girlfriend. I was up at four. Bad
 dream, explosion, monsters, all kinds of shit, I went to the
 living room and binged on *CSI: Miami*, five episodes, don't
 even like it, fell asleep, the dreams again, woke up –

HOLLY I had a dream too, the same thing... Monsters, an explosion.
 It's the weather. Apparently it happens in February? Because
 people are stuck inside, in their jobs doing the same kind of
 things with the same kind of problems, so we all have
 similar dreams.

MARK It's June.

He drinks his coffee.

You getting up then? Work to do. You mind fifties?

How's the course going?

She shrugs as he puts some money down and goes out.

Hope it's worth it.

Five

DENNIS, RUBY *and* SARAH *are having breakfast.*

SARAH Ruby tell your father what you're doing at school.

RUBY Dinosaurs.

DENNIS Dinosaurs? That's great. I love dinosaurs.

RUBY Yeah.

DENNIS Like *The Flintstones*!

RUBY I beg your pardon?

DENNIS You know. Fred Flintstone, Barney Rubble. We used to watch it munchkin, you remember?

RUBY It's not like *The Flintstones* at all. The fossil record shows that humans and dinosaurs never existed at the same time.

SARAH *drops her knife on her plate.*

DENNIS Well sure honey but it's a cartoon.

RUBY I know.

DENNIS These Flintstones, they go to the movies, they have cars powered with their feet, I don't think the fossil record has much to say about that either.

RUBY Yeah.

DENNIS But it's okay, because it's a story. It's not real.

RUBY Then it's not like what I studied at school, is it?

DENNIS Well.

RUBY What I studied at school is fact.

SARAH You see what I mean?

DENNIS Honey –

SARAH She's like this with me all the time.

RUBY Like what?

DENNIS *finishes his breakfast. Puts his napkin down on the table.*

DENNIS Have you read books?

RUBY I'm always reading books.

DENNIS I mean fiction.

RUBY Yeah.

DENNIS What?

RUBY ...

DENNIS What about... Harry Potter! Have you read that?

RUBY Yes.

DENNIS Did you like it?

RUBY No.

DENNIS Why?

RUBY It was stupid.

DENNIS Well that's the idea. It's like using your imagination. It's not real. That's the point.

RUBY I know what fiction is. I don't mean imaginary I mean it's stupid. It's not intelligent. It's for children.

DENNIS Well sure but your mother and me –

RUBY Really stupid children who only understand short words like 'cat' and 'apple' and 'house'

DENNIS Your mother and me, we like it – the story's interesting. It takes us out of the real world and shows us something else, something more that makes the real world better. Maybe you should give it another go? It's fun.

RUBY Dad? Have you seen what's going on? A man kills seventy people with a gun, hundreds of protestors executed by the Syrian government, thousands of children starving in the Horn of Africa.

There's evil Dad. There's so much evil in the world. I don't have time for fun.

Six

The park. Green open space. People milling about. It's a weekday, so not that busy.

ZIA is with FIONA.

ZIA What about Friday?

FIONA I'm sorry?

ZIA We could go out on Friday? There's this new film, it's a documentary about the larger asteroids. Some of them are bigger than the planets and they reckon that –

FIONA Listen –

ZIA – instead of manned missions to Mars next, we might go to one of them, some of them might have ice, water, maybe life, what do you think? I know it sounds geeky but it's good and we can get popcorn.

FIONA It's not working.

ZIA Pepsi.

FIONA I don't want to see you again.

ZIA Shitload of nachos. What?

FIONA Zia. We don't get on.

ZIA Yeah we do.

FIONA No.

ZIA I do.

FIONA Exactly.

ZIA Oh.

Beat.

FIONA I want to call it a day.

ZIA Why?

FIONA Zia –

ZIA Cos you can't just say that say it's not working and leave it like that you can't – okay give me one proper reason yeah?

FIONA The shouting. In your sleep. It wakes me up.

ZIA Oh. Right. The shouting.

FIONA Yeah.

ZIA Yeah. Well.

FIONA *turns to leave –*

Wait! Please. Wait a –

JOHN *arrives, places the bucket on the ground and stands on it.*

JOHN Okay okay okay.

ZIA *turns, at first irritated, then starts to listen.*

I know this is weird and you're having a good time but I've had a thought about a battery hen.

FIONA *leaves.*

Okay. So this hen has lived in this box her whole life. She's never seen anything else. She just sits there and the food arrives and the eggs get taken away. Now of course her brain is much smaller than ours but I'd like to imagine she has some thoughts on her situation.

What would she think about the world?

She hears noises, so she thinks there are others outside. On the evidence she's got, she'd probably assume these are other chickens. She's unlikely to work out that her keepers are people – she'd have no concept of us, the world, the ground, the Sun or the Moon. Limited by what she could sense, and what her brain could deduce, she would get it all very, very wrong.

ALICE crosses the park, watches for a moment, and leaves.

My thought was that, like that hen, we go around thinking eventually we'll work everything out – but limited by what we can sense and what we can deduce, surely it's possible there are things that leave no evidence and no trace? That we have no concept of.

So when people say they are sure that there can't be a God, even when they say that it's unlikely, they're like a battery hen denying the existence of the Moon. They can't know. None of us can, for sure. What was there before the universe? What happens when we die?

ROB hears this...

LIAM crosses the park, stops to listen to JOHN.

It's all open.

Same time tomorrow.

A slightly embarrassed silence. LIAM walks off. JOHN gets down off the bucket and picks it up. ROB approaches him, nervous – distracted. HOLLY hangs around.

ROB Hi. Are you – from a group – an organisation?

JOHN No. Just me.

ROB I'm... going away – we're all heading off and... Have you got a book?

JOHN No.

ROB A leaflet?

JOHN I'm here tomorrow.

ROB I'm going away.

HOLLY I'll film it.

ROB What?

HOLLY I'll film it tomorrow, put it online, then you can watch it, yeah?

ROB Oh. Right. Thanks.

HOLLY What's your name?

JOHN John.

HOLLY John in the park. That's what I'll call it.

ROB Right. Thanks.

He goes.

HOLLY I'm Holly by the way.

JOHN Good to meet you.

They shake hands and she goes, leaving ZIA.

ZIA Have you heard about the graph?

JOHN What?

ZIA There's this graph and if you plot scientific progress against time you see it's an exponential curve. The rate of progress doubles every ten years and if you plot this curve it gets to a point where it's a straight line, which would technically mean infinite progress in a single moment. According to the graph it is going to happen in ten years. This moment. The singularity.

Thought it was interesting. Sorry, I'm a bit – my girlfriend just left me.

Apparently I'm shouting, at night and... It puts them off.

Tomorrow yeah?

JOHN Yeah.

Seven

A large table, around which are gathered, for a briefing – SIR CHRISTOPHER (Head of the Armed Forces), DENNIS and RUTH, who's with CAROL, MARTIN and LIAM.

CAROL The Head of the Armed Forces Prime Minister –

RUTH Sir Christopher thank you for coming. Always nice to have a uniform in the building, engenders some much-needed formality in the ranks don't you think Carol?

SIR CHRISTOPHER Glad to be of service.

RUTH This is Dennis Harrison.

DENNIS Sir Christopher, good to meet you.

SIR CHRISTOPHER You're from the Embassy.

RUTH Dennis is working with us on this. He's close to the President. Shall we make a start?

MARTIN Everyone's been given the background to look over –

SIR CHRISTOPHER Good because in the past political advisors have been strangely uninformed –

RUTH Liam, are you strangely uninformed about Iran?

LIAM I worked in Arab countries for five years?

SIR CHRISTOPHER Iran isn't an Arab country.

LIAM Well...

SIR CHRISTOPHER This is what I mean.

RUTH Very good. Liam, read the file. Sir Christopher?

SIR CHRISTOPHER Three months ago, Iran pulled out of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The withdrawal is a clear sign the

regime has the intention and potentially the technology to develop a nuclear weapon – which of course, would change everything – the ability of the regime to act against its own people with impunity, the balance of power with Israel. It would also allow the fundamentalist religious faction in Iran to propagate their anti-Semitic and anti-Western agenda with even more vigour. But our biggest concern is terrorism. If nuclear material and technology fell into the hands of a terrorist group, it would destabilise the entire civilised world.

DENNIS What terrorist group?

SIR CHRISTOPHER I beg your pardon?

DENNIS Can we be specific?

SIR CHRISTOPHER Iran funds and supports enemy factions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Their money kills our soldiers.

DENNIS But no links with Al-Qaeda.

SIR CHRISTOPHER No.

DENNIS I'm just clarifying because when you say terrorism –

SIR CHRISTOPHER I'm sure the Prime Minister understands the difference – Prime Minister, perhaps we should have this meeting on our own –

DENNIS The Prime Minister likes perspective.

SIR CHRISTOPHER Yes. That's what I provide.

DENNIS You have an opinion.

SIR CHRISTOPHER And you don't?

RUTH Of course he does. That's what I want. Opinions. Both of you.

SIR CHRISTOPHER Alright – the US military is looking at an initial campaign potentially beginning in approximately four weeks' time. We concur with the Americans that anything less than a full-scale occupation would have little effect to

the nuclear programme, in fact it may simply encourage them to speed it up.

RUTH There's not a way of standing back? Providing military support for some kind of... home-grown / revolution?

SIR CHRISTOPHER Much too slow and unreliable I'm afraid. No, the only way to do it is to get in the country quickly and physically dismantle every last piece.

RUTH All or nothing.

SIR CHRISTOPHER That's correct.

Fractional beat.

LIAM Can I...?

RUTH Liam?

LIAM The British people will ask why we're spending millions on a war a long way away when their hospital's in crisis, the library is closed and their son can't go to university. They will protest in their thousands. I don't know if you could survive it.

SIR CHRISTOPHER The public don't have the long view, Prime Minister, that's why they elected you. If we get this wrong, there will be serious consequences for decades to come. We've tried everything else but the Iranian intentions are clear. They want the bomb.

DENNIS They want respect. It's not so long ago Britain and America were funding a war against them. So we're trying to build up trust.

SIR CHRISTOPHER Your talks. How are they going?

DENNIS They're going well.

SIR CHRISTOPHER My counterparts at The Pentagon don't have much hope. A waste of time. That's what they said.

DENNIS That remains to be seen.

Beat.

RUTH If we did it. Casualties?

SIR CHRISTOPHER Minimum.

RUTH Not just our troops. I mean in total, the invasion, the aftermath, Iranian, American, British, if we proceed, how many people would die?

SIR CHRISTOPHER Prime Minister I'm reluctant to confidently predict –

RUTH Sir Christopher, in the end I may well have to pick up that phone and condemn a large number of people to death, so is it not reasonable to ask if you know roughly what that number will be?

SIR CHRISTOPHER Of course, but –

RUTH A hundred? Five hundred? Five thousand?

SIR CHRISTOPHER We'd hope that the Iranians themselves would welcome action like this and –

DENNIS A hundred thousand. That's what they're telling me. On previous experience, assuming this will take years to achieve, over a hundred thousand dead.

Beat.

Prime Minister, the talks are progressing. We sincerely hope this will all be academic.

Beat.

RUTH Keep me updated. Thank you everyone. Carol – give me the room for a minute, yes?

They go, leaving RUTH on her own.

We hear the sound of a Hoover... SHANNON enters.

SHANNON Oh hello!

RUTH No.

No!

Not. Now. Go.

Go away.

SHANNON *looks at her, leaves the hoover running, a strange moment. Then she takes off her apron, throws it on the ground, and leaves.*

RUTH *goes across, slowly, and switches the hoover off.*

Eight

AMIR *is watching a video of JOHN on a laptop.*

JOHN (Voice-over.) ‘We’ve given up and now we wave it all through – class, inequality, unkindness, we glamorise violence, lust after infinite riches, and we all feel it but the question is why?’

RACHEL *comes in. AMIR stays watching the video. RACHEL goes to switch on the lamp.*

AMIR Alright?

The lamp doesn’t work. AMIR doesn’t see.

Good day?

He keeps watching the video.

RACHEL I really don’t want to be the boring one?

AMIR What?

RACHEL Pause it.

AMIR What? Oh –

He stops the video.

RACHEL Thank you I really don’t want to be the boring one and I know we’re in very different places at the moment in our lives – you’ve been on the internet all day reading the

Guardian website, watching your videos – how's John getting on?

AMIR Good – people are starting to write about what he's doing –

RACHEL Yeah and you've been posting and tweeting and all of that and you've had a nice day which is good but I've got work, and this is the bit where I really don't want to be the boring one in this relationship but did you call about the washing machine?

AMIR Okay –

RACHEL Did you pick up the shopping?

AMIR ...

RACHEL Do the light bulbs? Well no we can see the answer to that.

AMIR I just got... I've got into this. Have you watched him? Have you actually sat down and heard what he's got to say?

RACHEL When would I have time to do that?

Beat.

AMIR Rach, we've always talked – look I know this sounds a bit mad – but we've talked ever since university about the moment when something changes, and John's saying these things, and... you know... he's open, he's passionate and he means it. And it's only just started, but people are listening because he's taking everyone out of all of this – exactly what you're talking about our little houses and things we buy and washing machines and light bulbs and he's making them feel like there could be something more.

RACHEL Have you left the sofa today?

AMIR ...

RACHEL What?

Beat.

Anyway. I *like* our house. What's wrong with our house?

AMIR looks at her, a bit crushed. JOHN enters.

John, we were just talking about you. Had a good day?
Amir's saying you're becoming famous.

JOHN You've been working hard.

RACHEL Yeah I have.

JOHN That's good.

But I think you should stop now.

RACHEL What?

JOHN For the evening. Stop.

RACHEL Stop what – what are you talking about, weird abstract
instructions. What, is my energy a bit high at the moment,
you're going to sort out my *chakra*. Okay. I'll stop. What?
What now?

Beat.

Shall we do a *trust exercise*?

JOHN You find it difficult, don't you?

RACHEL I... No.

Beat.

What?

JOHN See?

RACHEL Oh fuck off John.

JOHN smiles – he knows her.

JOHN I've done the shopping. Got everything we need.

I'll cook tonight. You put your feet up.

AMIR I was going to get it.

JOHN No. It's fine. You two stay there. My turn.

He goes.

AMIR and RACHEL sit for a moment.

Then as EDITH starts playing, RACHEL pulls the laptop over and starts to watch the video.

Nine

EDITH goes to the piano. There's a cross on the top.

She begins to play a tune. 'The Only Girl in the World' by Rihanna.

As she does, SARAH appears outside her house, smoking.

Ten

Morning. SARAH is smoking outside her house. She sees JOHN walking past.

SARAH Hey!

JOHN looks up and walks over.

JOHN Hello

SARAH It's you. Isn't it? From the airport.

JOHN Yes. I'm sorry. I was a mess then, wasn't I? I think I scared your daughter.

SARAH No. She should be apologising. Everything scares her.

JOHN She's a little girl.

SARAH Even smoking. That's why I have to stand out here.

I'm Sarah.

JOHN John.

SARAH Hi John.

Beat.

JOHN Is this your house?

SARAH It's the property of the US government. My husband. I think it's a prison. What are you up to?

JOHN I'm going to the park. Every day I go, I speak for a while, then we sit and talk about things.

SARAH Who's we?

JOHN Anyone who's around.

SARAH That sounds nice.

JOHN You should come. We start at one o'clock.

SARAH I'm not supposed to leave the house on my own. We're high security. If I want to go shopping I make a phone call and they send these men round. All dressed in black. They look after us.

JOHN Maybe you could sneak away? Come with me.

SARAH Maybe.

Beat.

JOHN Last time, you weren't sleeping.

SARAH The dreams.

JOHN How are they now?

She looks at him.

SARAH Do you believe in God John?

JOHN I believe there's something, yes.

SARAH Do you think sometimes, you have to go with your instinct, sometimes if you know something is right, you have to do it, even if everyone around you thinks you're mad?

JOHN Sometimes you have to do what you believe to be right.

SARAH Yes.

JOHN If it's important.

She looks at him for a second. Offers him a cigarette.

SARAH Do you want one of these?

JOHN No thank you. I should go.

SARAH You know it wasn't the smell that she had a problem with.
I think she could tell you were good.
A good man. And she didn't like it.

JOHN Bye Sarah.

SARAH Bye.

Eleven

The park. Light, green grass, blue sky. A slightly bigger crowd, sat and stood around the bucket. ZIA, SHANNON and HOLLY are there. Also in the crowd is MARTIN, on his lunchbreak. Halfway through the speech, MARK turns up to watch.

JOHN There are things we want. We want the very best healthcare and education, free at the point of use, for all. We want to narrow the gap between rich and poor, both here, and across the world. But with these things we are told – this is just not how the world works any more. You are naive if you think any of it is possible.

So we shrug and walk away, and learn instead the comfort of the downbeat, the safety of irony and pessimism. We sleepwalk from weekend to weekend, looking forward to the simple comforts. We earn we buy, we live we die, we earn we buy, this, we are told, is enough – central heating, delivery shopping, bread and circuses, wine and HBO.

STEPHEN *walks by, notices what's going on, and stops to watch.*

Well I want you to remove the barriers and believe that these may be the facts on the ground but the ground can be changed – to work out what you want and go for it with all your conviction and don't care if you seem outrageous or stupid. Believe in God, believe in each other, in progress or science or whatever you want but through believing in the impossible you might just make it happen. All that's needed, in the end, is belief.

JOHN steps off the bucket. STEPHEN approaches JOHN.

STEPHEN So.

JOHN Stephen.

STEPHEN I live in Notting Hill, I walk into town, I attend my meeting, then on ambling back I see this group of people gathered together, reminding me of the political rallies of my youth, I go to investigate and... oh look!

A resurrection.

Of sorts.

Where have you been John?

It did you no good. Disappearing like that. Made you look guilty. And your friends... well.

JOHN Do you think it's going to rain?

STEPHEN It was a selfish thing to do. Don't you think? I mean I personally, I would call it a number of things far worse than that, but at the very least it was selfish, to abandon everyone. Don't you agree?

As STEPHEN carries on, JOHN puts his hand out – no rain...

Is this what you're up to? Since you've come back. Preaching.

JOHN Your eyes are red.

STEPHEN It happens at my age. What are you here to talk about?

God?

JOHN

STEPHEN Does Ruth know? That you're back. Have you told her?

No. Of course you haven't.

HOLLY *comes over with a clipboard.*

HOLLY Hello.

JOHN Holly, this is Stephen Crossley he used to be my lecturer at university, taught me a lot. Stephen famously doesn't believe in God, in fact he thinks belief is dangerous, not just organised religion but *belief itself*. He goes around claiming that there 'probably isn't a God' which considering almost any definition of a divine being is a weirdly unintellectual and totally unprovable statement to make, and if there's one thing Stephen objects to it's things you can't prove. But he's a good man. And he can drink a lot. Holly's collecting email addresses, she's started a website, and she has sex for money.

HOLLY What? Shut up.

JOHN You said you're fine with it.

HOLLY Yeah I am.

JOHN Well then.

JOHN puts his hand out. Still no rain. ZIA's in the background.

STEPHEN John, let me give you her number.

SHANNON interrupts as STEPHEN writes on a piece of paper.

SHANNON Hi.

STEPHEN Let me give you her number.

SHANNON Sorry, to interrupt – oops – I'm Shannon, I've been watching the other speeches – thought I'd come down and see for myself.

JOHN Hi

SHANNON I just wanted to say... they're really... I've quit my job! I think you're right. We have to do something important.

STEPHEN You've quit your job?

SHANNON I hated my boss.

STEPHEN How do you do it John?

SHANNON I beg your pardon?

STEPHEN These people – she quit her job? The way things are at the moment – who does that?

SHANNON I am here.

STEPHEN What is all this? The park. The speeches. Your little friends. What are you up to?

JOHN Have you had bad dreams?

STEPHEN ...

 JOHN *looks at him.*

JOHN Oh.

 Hang on...

Thunder and it starts to rain. Everyone gets umbrellas and coats out.

 STEPHEN, *unimpressed, writes a number down.*

STEPHEN This is her personal number – you'll get straight through. Call her.

He walks away. JOHN leaves with ZIA and SHANNON, as HOLLY puts her hood up and tries to sort out her phone.

 MARK *is there.*

MARK You haven't answered my calls. You're here every day. I see you on my lunchbreak. Going round with your... clipboard. Why didn't you get back to me?

HOLLY I don't...

MARK You don't... what?

HOLLY What we do. I don't like it.

MARK What? – You don't like it – Then why didn't you say?

HOLLY I was scared.

MARK Of what?

HOLLY Of you.

MARK ...

JOHN *comes over with an umbrella.*

Oh. Hello. Good. Saw your speech.

HOLLY Mark –

MARK Saw the website too. Funny. It is supposed to be funny right?

HOLLY Just fuck off yeah this isn't anything to do with you.

JOHN It's okay.

MARK What?

JOHN Really. Mark. It's okay.

MARK Right. I need to get back to the office. You know. Job. Money.

Holly. Call me yeah?

He looks at JOHN. Something unnerving, which he ignores.

He goes off, into the rain. HOLLY turns to JOHN, on the point of tears, in the rain. Just the two of them.

Pause.

JOHN Are you alright?

She isn't. JOHN opens the umbrella and she hugs him underneath, and cries.

Twelve

In RUTH's Number 10 flat. STEPHEN enters. RUTH is getting ready.

RUTH This better be important. I'm late and then there's a call saying that the famous *atheist* Stephen Crossley has just turned up at Number 10. The press all saw you walk in. What's going on?

STEPHEN I thought you'd want to know.

RUTH What?

STEPHEN John's come back. I saw him.

Beat.

I gave him your number. Said he should call you.

RUTH What number?

STEPHEN Your number, your personal number.

RUTH looks at a phone on the side.

RUTH I'm... I'm late.

I'm really...

I have to go...

She slams the side of her dressing table, hard. Angry.

She looks out the window. The rain pours down hard.

Is it me, or is getting darker?

Thirteen

SARAH is chopping vegetables in the kitchen. Tense. The rain outside.

RUBY enters reading her Kindle.

SARAH It's bedtime.

RUBY I'm reading.

SARAH You've read enough.

RUBY I'm nearly at the end.

SARAH You can finish it in bed.

RUBY I don't want to finish it in bed, once you get to bed you start to fall asleep, I want to think about this.

SARAH

RUBY Mom, do you read books?

SARAH Of course.

RUBY I never see you. What was the last book you read?

SARAH *chops.*

What do you do?

SARAH I'm your mommy.

RUBY But what do you do for a living?

SARAH I run a charity.

RUBY On Thursdays.

SARAH Yes.

RUBY In the afternoons on Thursdays.

SARAH ...

RUBY Between two and four-thirty.

SARAH ...

RUBY I'm reading a book about emancipation and it seems to me that it's okay for women to go out in the world and make something of themselves, in fact it seems to me that that's a good thing and it's been fought for by generations of women in the past, but you don't do that, you stay in most of the time with me, and even when I'm at school you're still here.

SARAH *chops.*

Maybe if you read books it would take you out of yourself.

SARAH Ruby...

RUBY We read to know we're not alone.

SARAH It's your bedtime.

RUBY No.

SARAH I've had enough.

RUBY You should read.

SARAH I'm not alone.

RUBY You don't like me asking questions.

SARAH It's time to listen to your mommy.

RUBY I think questioning makes us who we are.

SARAH You're not a good child, are you?

RUBY Why don't you like me asking questions Mom?

SARAH You're not *good*

RUBY You always get angry when I ask questions.

SARAH *chops. Chops.*

Is it possible for a daughter to be cleverer than her mother?

SARAH *stops chopping and looks at RUBY.*

The fluorescent light above flickers. Strobes.

Mom?

The cupboard door opens in the kitchen and an emaciated figure all in black slowly emerges.

Mom!

RUBY *starts screaming as the figure grabs her. She kicks and screams as he drags her into the cupboard. The moment the door is shut again, the kitchen returns to normal.*

SARAH *carries on chopping.*

Slow fade to black.

ACT THREE

One

We again hear Laurie Anderson's 'Someone Else's Dream'.

This time it's cut even shorter.

The twelve wake up again, as before, terrified and breathing.

Two

Music plays. EDITH stares straight forward – terrified, in a trance – we're not sure...

MARK *and ALICE enter.*

MARK Edith the door was open.

He sees her.

Edith?

EDITH Oh. Mark. Didn't hear you. Going a bit deaf.

MARK They're going to drop the case.

EDITH What?

MARK They're going to drop the case.

EDITH I'm a bit deaf...

MARK They're going to drop the case!

EDITH Is this your girlfriend?

MARK Oh for Christ's –

ALICE I'm Alice. Mark's assistant. We spoke on the phone.

EDITH Do you have a girlfriend?

MARK Look we're in a bit of a hurry.

EDITH My granddaughter Holly, she's your age.

MARK I know, she's the one who –

EDITH But she's black. You might have a problem with that.

MARK No.

EDITH Some white guys get scared by black girls that's what she told me.

MARK The bank have been persuaded to stop.

EDITH What did you tell them?

MARK They thought this was your house.

EDITH I rent it.

MARK I know but they thought it was yours. When I proved to them that wasn't the case, they said they'd let it go, on one condition.

EDITH Maybe you should go out with Alice. She seems like a nice girl.

ALICE He's not my type.

MARK Can we concentrate?

EDITH You know Mark, there was a time when the high street bank wouldn't sue an old woman for all she was worth.

MARK You threw a shopping trolley through their window.

EDITH They did far worse to me.

MARK Yes, look –

EDITH (*To ALICE.*) I was stood in that queue for half an hour and my legs were hurting and there were no chairs and no one was helping, and I asked for help but no one did anything, they just thought I was mad, so I left, and I was going to change to another bank but then I realised I couldn't because I've got a terrible credit rating because of the overdraft

charges they made and I was walking down that road and all these young people were out protesting and rioting and I thought good for them – I thought, I've had enough so there was a trolley yes and I picked it up and put it through their window, the money they've taken off me more than makes up for it, I hate that bank. It's shit. It's a shit bank.

NatWest. It was NatWest if you want to know.

She goes to her computer.

MARK Edith you're not allowed in any branch from now on.

EDITH Suits me. Do you wear those shoes to work?

ALICE Yes I do.

EDITH Shoes say a lot about a person dear.

ALICE Really?

EDITH And your shoes say I'm a fucking idiot don't take me seriously whatever you do. How much are you charging me then?

MARK We'll send you an invoice.

EDITH I found a plate I can put on eBay, that's a start...

ALICE Mark...

MARK Alright, call it a favour...

EDITH What?

MARK Don't worry about the money.

EDITH If only. Here we are!

Money yes, none of that, I thought the world was going to hell in a handcart, another Thatcher making everything worse and worse but then my granddaughter showed me this. She's been making these videos.

MARK Oh don't tell me –

EDITH It's this man. He goes into the park and he stands there and speaks and look.
Look how many people have been watching. Thousands.
That's where she is now.
I like him.
His name's John.

Three

DENNIS *arrives back at the house. He has a suitcase. SARAH is in her dressing gown, watching something on a laptop.*

DENNIS Hey!

SARAH Hey.
She closes the laptop down.
How was the flight?

DENNIS Aargh. Red eye.

SARAH Toast?

DENNIS Toast! Good.
SARAH starts slicing bread with a knife and puts the bread into a toaster.

Missed you. How's munchkin? Where is she?

SARAH In bed. Reading. She's never off that thing you gave her.

DENNIS She's a good kid.

SARAH Here.

DENNIS What?

SARAH Coffee?

DENNIS Oh. Thanks. Still in bed?

Doesn't she have... what is it? *Ballet* this morning?

SARAH She didn't want to go.

DENNIS Really?

SARAH Last night she said don't get me up I want to stay in bed in the morning and read.

DENNIS She likes ballet.

SARAH Well then you have a conversation with her Dennis, if you don't trust me, that I've done my best, why don't you go in there and ask her?

The toast pops. SARAH butters it.

DENNIS Hey.

SARAH What?

DENNIS ...

SARAH There.

She gives him the toast. He takes a bite.

DENNIS Thanks.

Still the dreams?

SARAH ...

DENNIS You should take those pills.

SARAH They don't help.

Pause. DENNIS eats another slice of toast. Looks at his watch.

DENNIS Hell. I have to go.

SARAH How are things at work? Is everything... okay?

DENNIS ...

SARAH ...

DENNIS I love you. We'll all catch up tonight.

He kisses her and goes with his toast. SARAH stares for a moment. Then goes, opens the computer, and presses play on what she was watching.

Four

The park. ZIA and SHANNON, and others, wait for JOHN.

They coyly watch each other, eventually striking up a conversation –

ZIA Thirteen.

SHANNON What?

ZIA If you go through his speeches and you count the letters in the right way you get the number thirteen, again and again.

SHANNON You've tried it?

ZIA People have yeah, cos thirteen's unlucky in almost every culture. Apparently there's these insects and they live underground and only come out every thirteen years, cos thirteen's the least likely mathematically to coincide with other insects' breeding patterns.

SHANNON This on the internet?

ZIA Yeah.

SHANNON Thought so.

JOHN enters with his bucket. A HECKLER is nearby and enthusiastic.

As JOHN's about to speak –

HECKLER Talk about Iran!

JOHN I... what?

HECKLER Well they're saying it's all going to kick off soon, so what do you think about that then?

HOLLY No... he – let him talk –

HECKLER Come on!
 What do you think?
 JOHN looks at the HECKLER. Then steps off the bucket and goes.
 What?
 Where's he going?
 HOLLY goes after him.

SHANNON See ya then.

ZIA Right.
 Do you want to... come round mine. Tonight. I've got a telescope.

SHANNON I beg your pardon?

ZIA It's new. I saved up. To look at the – you know – stars.
 So. We could.

SHANNON Yeah.

ZIA Do that.

SHANNON Okay.

ZIA If you want?

SHANNON Yeah.

ZIA What?

SHANNON Yeah.

ZIA You will?

SHANNON Yeah.

ZIA Shit.
 Good.
 Beat.
 Do you know anything about it?

SHANNON What?
ZIA Iran.
SHANNON Not really.

Five

STEPHEN *is making a speech at the Oxford Union.*

STEPHEN Ladies and gentlemen, the Iranian regime is, simply put, brutal. They have clung on to power, rigged elections, kidnapped, tortured, repressed, and murdered their own people in their thousands, and have been shown to actively support terrorist organisations.

As you may imagine, the regime is deeply unpopular with the majority of Iranians, who are, by and large, young, educated and desperate to choose their own future. These young people know what they are missing, how their freedoms are curtailed. They are desperate to put an end to this oppression but their voices are silenced and their numbers reduced through imprisonment, torture and death. And let us not forget, as the mullahs have, to consider the women. The women here tonight, if you were Iranian, would be possessions. If, as a woman, you cheated on your husband, you would be stoned to death. If you are interested and want to see a woman being stoned to death then I direct you to the internet where ladies and gentlemen, you will find a number of videos – but I give you a warning – it is utterly horrific and it takes her a very long time to die.

Six

A split scene – RUTH and DENNIS in her office. AMIR and RACHEL at home.

RUTH How was the trip?

DENNIS Good.

RUTH You spoke to the President?

DENNIS Yes.

AMIR Yeah.

RUTH What did he say?

RACHEL Just take a minute, take a minute to breathe, cos I can't believe –

DENNIS You've read the transcripts, I'm sure your people have spoken to you.

AMIR I don't need a minute.

DENNIS The feeling in Washington is that these talks were always just stalling for time.

AMIR I know what I think.

DENNIS The President's had enough.

AMIR It's like everything John's been saying.

RACHEL John? No. John's not here, let's stay on you.

DENNIS He feels this is the moment.

AMIR We should do it.

RACHEL War?

RUTH I see.

AMIR Yes.

DENNIS Yes.

Beat.

AMIR This is an opportunity. You haven't been there. You're not allowed to speak your mind, the punishments the regime hands out are medieval –

RACHEL Well if that's the criteria / there's a long list of other countries.

DENNIS You'll talk to him yourself but the President asked me to come and speak to you tonight. To test the water.

AMIR Government-sanctioned gangs pulling people out of cars for not dressing correctly, doctors, academics arrested for speaking out

DENNIS He wonders how you're feeling.

RUTH How I'm feeling?

DENNIS That's right.

AMIR – and there are young people like us sat in rooms like this watching TV and they'll be praying we go in and help them.

RACHEL You've got family out there – you want them bombed?

RUTH How I'm *feeling*?

RACHEL You want to throw the country into civil war?

AMIR It's exactly what John says about purpose. I've had enough of sitting back and letting them –

RACHEL Well you would know about sitting back.

RUTH I give an order, and then within hours, people are dead.

AMIR I thought you believed in the rights of women.

RACHEL Of course –

AMIR But only in this country –

RACHEL I'm not sure a genocidal war will benefit women in any country particularly, but seeing as you know so much about women and their rights –

RUTH I don't want to go to war, Dennis, but if it's necessary –

AMIR When did you start talking to me like this?

RUTH I absolutely will.

AMIR When did you entirely lose respect?

RUTH So how am I *feeling*?

RACHEL I don't know.

RUTH Ambivalent.

DENNIS Right.

AMIR Right.

RACHEL But... since you ask, it's probably to do with what you're advocating, John wouldn't want this, no one we know would want this – massive invasion and occupation of a country that hasn't attacked us, hundreds of thousands dead,

AMIR The people I know over there are ready for sacrifice –

RACHEL But this isn't them fighting this is us, with troops and planes that flatten blocks and villages – Amir I don't even know where / to start if you're stupid or naive or right-wing, we went on the *anti-war march* remember you shouting all the way –

AMIR No, no, you can't shut up you're talking and being clever and sneering all the fucking time but you never think really *think* about anything – you wonder why I wake up in the night screaming it's nothing to do with what's going on there, it's probably being next to you all night, this stuff in your head, all your *problems*.

DENNIS Ruth.

RUTH I'm sorry?

DENNIS Can I call you Ruth?

AMIR John was right.

RACHEL What?

DENNIS May I speak freely?

AMIR You talk and shout and tell people what to do but you never listen really, you never – just – stop.

RACHEL I...

RUTH Yes?

DENNIS Do you have anyone?

RUTH What?

DENNIS Anyone you can talk to, about how you feel, because from what I see... can I say this? From what I see, you're on your own, and under a lot of pressure.

Everyone knows you've been through a lot. And these people you're surrounded by, your advisors, I don't know how much they understand... If you needed someone to... To talk to...

RACHEL Alright then.

AMIR What?

DENNIS I think we get on.

RUTH *stares at him.*

AMIR What?

MARTIN *enters.*

MARTIN Mr Harrison. There's a call for you.

Your wife.

Apparently it's urgent.

DENNIS I'm sorry. Prime Minister, we could talk about the options.

RACHEL Yes. Let's stop. You and me. Tonight.

RUTH Dennis. Thank you for the offer and you're right, I'm under a lot of pressure, but I think I'm coping with it all quite well considering my emotional state and the fact I'm a woman and everything.

AMIR That's not what I...

DENNIS That's not what I meant.

RUTH When the time comes, I'll make my decision.
I know what you meant.
Talk to your wife.
DENNIS *turns and enters the kitchen where SARAH is sat, smoking.*
RUTH *stays for a while, then leaves.*

AMIR Rachel –

RACHEL Yes.
Yes.
Let's put an end to it.

Seven

DENNIS's house. SARAH is sat smoking at the kitchen table. DENNIS enters. Slowly. Devastated.

DENNIS They say there's been no forced entry to the house.

SARAH So where's she gone? Why would she do this to us? We look after her. I'm frightened –

DENNIS If she had any sense of anything it was responsibility, she understood that what we do affects other people. She wouldn't run away.

SARAH We should call her friends.

DENNIS They don't know anything.

SARAH Oh God oh God. Shouldn't you be at work?

DENNIS Honey, our daughter –

SARAH But it's important.

DENNIS Our daughter has gone. I'm not doing anything else until we find her.

SARAH Why?
DENNIS What?
SARAH Why has this happened? To us. Didn't I treat her right?
 DENNIS *looks at SARAH, without an answer.*
 Pray.
DENNIS She'll be okay.
SARAH Pray with me.
 SARAH *puts her cigarette out and shuts her eyes.* DENNIS
 looks at her then does the same.
 Please... God.

Eight

It's getting later now. Night. Stars.

A choral singer starts. Baroque.

As SARAH prays we see MARK coming back to his flat with some booze and cigarettes, and ALICE, who's a bit drunk. He lights cigarettes, pours drink, ignores ALICE.

SARAH God, save us, save us from darkness, save us from
 damnation.
 EDITH *puts on her iPod and goes out running.*
 Save us from evil, from the end, from death and pain...
 ZIA and SHANNON *are out with a telescope looking at the*
 stars. SHANNON smokes. HOLLY, with an iPod, calls
 EDITH.
 JOHN *appears, walking through all of them.*
SHANNON That one...
SARAH From the end.

SHANNON It looks like a hand, reaching out.

SARAH Save us from what we fear, guide us to salvation,

ZIA You ever wonder what's at the edge?

SARAH ...show us how to live.

SHANNON The edge of what?

SARAH ...show us the light.

ZIA The universe.

EDITH Hello?

HOLLY Gran? He's gone.

EDITH Who? Who's gone?

ZIA You know it's actually quite likely that there are an infinite number of parallel universes where each possibility that could ever happen is played out. Every possibility.

SHANNON You say this stuff to all the girls?

ZIA Er... yeah. I do actually.

MARK Come on then.

SHANNON I think that's where you go wrong.

The phone is ringing. RUTH looks at it. Then answers it.

RUTH Hello?

Yes.

I...

JOHN *enters.*

I can't –

She hangs up, then unplugs the phone from the socket. Over the next page, she walks to the centre of the stage and closes her eyes. ALICE and MARK start to kiss. MARTIN arrives with a pile of papers to sort through.

ROB *packs his kit bag.* STEPHEN *continues his speech from earlier...*

JOHN Today I've read papers, watched the television.

STEPHEN You may think I'm alarmist, that I'm exaggerating.

JOHN I've seen the pictures we all have. Heard what's being said –

SHANNON They all think I'm stupid.

ZIA I don't.

JOHN They tell us, if we do nothing, it's a risk.

STEPHEN When I imagine what might happen in the years to come, what terrifies me the most?

MARK Stop.

STEPHEN A thermonuclear theocracy.

STEPHEN *coughs.* MARK *has pushed ALICE off.*

JOHN So instead, they say, we have to go in, and stop them.

ALICE What's the problem?

HOLLY Gran?

MARK Go. Get out. Get out!

JOHN The army. The airforce. Take Iran to pieces, bullets and bombs, just so we know, for sure.

HOLLY Where are you?

JOHN Just so we're safe.

ALICE *goes.* STEPHEN *coughs again.* MARK *slowly, over the next, turns, kneels and prays.*

HOLLY Gran, what are you up to?

EDITH Late-night run. Nothing like it, and before you say anything, I'm an old woman, with no money, what's the worse that can happen?

JOHN And we understand. We know what our leaders are telling us. But my question is – how do you feel?

AMIR and RACHEL are at home.

AMIR When you say end it? You mean...

RACHEL I don't know, it's just nothing works, any more. Does it?

JOHN Nervous?

HOLLY Gran?...

JOHN Sick?

HOLLY Are you okay?...

EDITH I'm sorry love, I was just feeling a bit... Oh.

HOLLY Gran?

EDITH sees something in the ground. Goes over to it.

JOHN Alone?

EDITH digs around, pulls on the object. It comes out of the ground – a child's hand.

STEPHEN collapses. SARAH shuts her eyes. EDITH, shocked, shuts her eyes. MARK praying. Shuts his eyes. HOLLY shuts her eyes and prays. SHANNON, ZIA, RACHEL and AMIR, the same.

Me too.

Of all of them, only RUTH stands – centre-stage, her eyes closed.

So. We have to act. Together. This is the moment.

We'll meet and march, and we'll take a message to parliament that says we do not want this war. A message that says everything has to change.

This is the moment we get better.

This is the moment it happens.

Yes.

In. Our. Name.

Interval.

ACT FOUR

One

Trafalgar Square. A protest is raging. A van has been converted into a makeshift stage with a screen. Loud music. Crowds surging. Banners, chanting. Energy and conviction – passion. But good-natured.

In the daylight, JOHN climbs up and stands on the stage, and the music fades.

JOHN Men and women of Britain! It's a bright day, it's a passionate day and it's time to throw things away and start again. From this day forward we will no longer simply be a country of failure, of guilt and insecurity. Instead, we will be a nation of principle, strength and peace. We will have standards. We will demand things that we have been told are out of date, things like kindness, politeness, welfare, equality. Things like *society*. And in contrast to what our generation has been told since we were born, we don't think it is foolish to believe rather than doubt, we don't think ideology is dead, we don't think it's all about compromise and pragmatism because like the best of men and women before us, we will aspire and yes, we will dream! There can be no progress without belief. Belief in the capacity of mankind, belief that we can be better, that we can be more than animals, more than selfish, more than warlike tribes, pushing each other out the way in brutal competition. The older generation, as they always do, tell us we are naive, trust us they say, we *know* that change is impossible. Well they always say that and it is up to us, with youth and hope and vision, to show them they are so, so wrong.

We have an idea. We have a way forward for this country. And today is our first test. Today we have been moved to action. We stand here, every one of us committed to the idea

that there is a future for Iran without innocent men, women and children dying in their thousands. We believe that with modern technology and old-fashioned solidarity, we can empower the Iranians to follow the example of other young people across the world, throw off their rulers and seize their country for themselves. Our generation is speaking with a clear voice, stating that one does not need violence to change the world, one needs passion, communication and conviction.

Today we say to the government that storming in with troops and taking over a country is not how we do things any more. Instead, in our names, in this time, we can communicate to people in every home in every place. In our name, in this time, we can reach out and empower them, not batter and destroy them, in our name we can demand freedom for Iran, we can encourage and support them to have a say over their future – in our name, we can all be better.

In our name!

CROWD In our name! In our name! In our name!

JOHN *walks into the crowd, as the chanting continues.*

Two

In Number 10. The protest on television. RUTH and STEPHEN are watching it.

They can also hear it outside. ‘In our name!

In our name!’

RUTH One year, we spent Christmas together. I’d already heard about him from Simon. This amazing best friend. He didn’t have anywhere to go so Simon invited him back to ours. He arrived with a few clothes, a case of wine and a pile of

books. We got on immediately, he spoke like someone much older. We talked into the night, they went for walks.

It was always about the two of them. Him and Simon. They were so... bright.

What does he want?

STEPHEN He's got something to prove.

RUTH Maybe. But what if it's worse.

What if he means it?

Three

In the crowd. HOLLY's handing out leaflets. MARK with her.

MARK Well I didn't see *this* coming. When I was a student we went to Trafalgar Square and got pissed, we just wanted a bottle of Diamond White that's as far as our ambition went, but you lot, you say let's go to the square for a party, you get what? Half a million?

HOLLY I don't have time for this.

MARK You said I was scary.

HOLLY You are.

MARK I'm helping your grandmother, for free. She doesn't think I'm scary when I get her off vandalism charges. I never made you do anything. Scary? What? Now? Am I *scary* now?

HOLLY Yes.

MARK We agreed it was a win-win situation, you were very empowered about it, but now you're saying that every time it happened and every time I paid you, you were in fact –

HOLLY Stop –

MARK Putting up with it.

HOLLY Yes.

MARK But you see *that* –

HOLLY Mark –

MARK That's a different thing – 'putting up with it' – that was *not* what we agreed. You need to be careful.

HOLLY *Careful?*

MARK Of when you say things, what you imply.

HOLLY Now you're threatening me.

MARK *No!*

He's in public. People start to look.

It's not threatening, I don't mean you need to be careful because I'll hit you –

HOLLY Jesus Mark –

MARK I mean you need to be *careful* of what you imply because when you say something like that to someone – like they're scary – it can go round their head, it has an effect –

HOLLY Mark you're a bastard. You say it yourself.

MARK Fine, but that doesn't mean I'm into *rape* or anything –

HOLLY I'm not saying rape.

MARK – what you're implying –

HOLLY I'm not saying that but paying girls for sex is –

MARK It's a deal.

HOLLY Jesus, a *deal*? Okay.

MARK No, no, don't do that, it is, it's a deal that we *agreed*, that you instigated in the first place – fuck's sake half the women of the world are saying you should take them seriously the other half are telling us don't listen to a word we say, 'when

we say we're fine with it Mark, we're *obviously* not telling the truth, instead of taking us seriously you should take care of us, as women, and not believe a fucking word'. No definitely means no, but yes does not in any way apparently mean yes. Do women have a right to do what they want with their bodies?

HOLLY You know it's wrong but you do it anyway.

MARK The thing is, the simple thing is Holly, that you've fucked this up, this bit of your life, and you feel bad about it and that's fine, but – you – you – You have to take some *fucking* responsibility for *something*!

She looks at him. Properly. For the first time.

HOLLY Men.

MARK No.

A moment.

Anyway. I didn't come here for you.

HOLLY Why then?

MARK I can't sleep.

Where is he?

Four

Number 10. MARTIN, LIAM and CAROL are there with RUTH and STEPHEN.

RUTH It's a phone call from Carol. Just testing the water.

STEPHEN Why do it at all?

RUTH The crowd's growing. Support in every city. Blanket television coverage. I have to do something.

STEPHEN The people elected you, they want you to be decisive.

Get the police out. You've done it before.

RUTH They're not aggressive, they're not violent.

STEPHEN Not yet.

RUTH There's no harm in listening.

STEPHEN By listening, by looking – by acknowledging his existence in any way you give him power.

He coughs. MARTIN receives a notification on his iPad.

MARTIN Prime Minister

RUTH What is it?

MARTIN It's about Dennis. They're charging his wife.

RUTH His – oh – God –

MARTIN Apparently they're not looking for anyone else.

RUTH How old was his daughter?

MARTIN Eleven.

A moment.

RUTH What was her name?

No one says anything.

Martin. Her name?

MARTIN I just told you.

RUTH What?

MARTIN I just said Prime Minister.

Ruby.

Her name was Ruby.

RUTH Oh.

STEPHEN Are you alright?

RUTH Martin. Send a message to Dennis. Anything I can do.

LIAM I would advise that you stay very distant from the whole –
RUTH Send the message. Keep me updated. Carol. Any word back?
CAROL Back?
RUTH From the square.
CAROL Well. No. It may take some time.
RUTH Why?
CAROL These are young people Prime Minister. Easily distracted.

Five

In the square, JOHN, RACHEL, AMIR, HOLLY, ZIA and SHANNON discuss the call. MARK stands towards the back, waiting.

JOHN Rachel, tell them I want to talk, just me and her, for an hour, this afternoon.

AMIR Why just the two of you?

ZIA We can come as well yeah?

JOHN No. Thank you.

ZIA But we've got this far –

RACHEL John if she saw how many of us there are –

SHANNON I'd tell her a thing or two –

JOHN She's watching the television. We've shown our numbers. But now the two of us have to sit and down and talk, listen, face to face. If we do that, we can get what we all want.

 So.

 Alright to make the call Rachel?

RACHEL Okay.

JOHN Thank you.

RACHEL *goes to call.*

AMIR What are you going to talk about?

JOHN What do you think?

AMIR Simon?

JOHN Why now?

AMIR What?

JOHN You hardly talk about it, I've been back for weeks and he's never mentioned, not really, not until now.

AMIR Because you're seeing her for the first time so I thought –

JOHN You miss him.

AMIR

JOHN So do I but these people are here for a reason. We're not going to talk about Simon, we're going to talk about a change of direction. Offering something new.

AMIR But she might want to –

JOHN Amir you wanted me to support the war, then when I disagree and we occupy the square, you change your mind, you stay with us. Why? What persuaded you?

AMIR You.

JOHN Well then. Trust me.

They look at each other.

MARK steps forward.

MARK Sorry... don't want to intrude...

JOHN Mark.

MARK You remember my name. Good. So the thing is every night I have this dream. The same one they all get. I'm not sleeping, I'm not working, in fact I'm not doing anything at the moment, and the more I thought about it the more strange it

was that you knew, back then remember, you looked at me and you could tell.

JOHN Yes.

MARK So, anyway, my whole life is, basically, fucked, I'm not just talking about this month, this year, I'm talking about not speaking to my dad because of an argument and then him dying, I'm talking about the love of my life who I cheated on, and now she's gone away, I'm talking about jeopardising a promising career by turning up smelling of booze, and then – she – Holly – said I was *scary* and I've been thinking and maybe, yes, maybe I am – and then these dreams, and in the state I was in, a week ago, I prayed. I fucking. I've never prayed in my life, but I was a mess, so I knelt down and asked for help. I don't know why but I asked for... forgiveness, and someone answered.

And it was you. Your voice.

Isn't that *weird*?

So.

I need to know. Yes? What's going on? Cos I'm like... this far... from hitting the fan, from the fucking *edge*. Of what I can. Do. So you need to tell me, quickly, really – You need to tell me now.

JOHN It's okay.

MARK What?

JOHN It's okay.

MARK 'Okay.' What the fuck does that... it's not, thanks for the words of. *What?*

Thanks for the –

JOHN looks at him. MARK starts crying. He can't help himself.

Shit... oh... fuck...

He falls to the floor, JOHN catches him. Holds on to him.

JOHN It's alright. It's alright.

RACHEL comes back in.

What did they say?

RACHEL Yes. They said yes.

Six

Number 10. RUTH, with MARTIN, LIAM and CAROL.

RUTH He's not bringing anyone else? None of his followers?

CAROL No.

LIAM The press are calling them his 'disciples'.

RUTH So that makes him...

LIAM Apparently he also does miracles.

RUTH What miracles?

MARTIN He knows when it's going to rain.

RUTH That's not a miracle Martin, that's the weather forecast –

CAROL Prime Minister. It's important for us all to convey that we think this meeting is a very bad idea, and whatever happens as a result of this meeting we can not take responsibility for it. None of us. Your political advisors, communications –

RUTH Nothing like support.

CAROL And the civil service.

RUTH Really *nothing* like support

LIAM If you come out of the meeting giving something away you lose credibility. On the other hand if you don't, people will say you are arrogant and patronising.

RUTH I understand, I'm on my own. Can you make sure Stephen's here?

CAROL Is he still –

RUTH Yes. He's still in Number 10. He needed to lie down.

CAROL Where?

RUTH I don't know.

CAROL Prime Minister –

RUTH Carol

CAROL You've invited a young man with no credentials except his ability to cause civil unrest into the heart of Number 10, somewhere around the building but we're not sure where is a highly controversial sleeping atheist, outside the window half a million people are protesting in the streets, and the Leader of the Free World might call at any moment to see if we want to go to war.

RUTH That's right.

CAROL Clear the room please!

They leave. MARTIN hangs back.

LIAM She said clear.

MARTIN I just...

RUTH What is it?

LIAM goes.

MARTIN If you want to know what the people think, of him, of you...
His gives her his iPad.
Tweets, the news, updating all the time. In case it's useful.
Prime Minister... I think you're right.
To listen to him. I've been out there – heard him speak –

RUTH You've not been sleeping have you Martin?

MARTIN I don't mean this politically, but over the last year. It feels like it's all falling apart. In the country. Across the world. Like people have gone wrong. And I... I think out of everything, he's...
I think he's good.

Seven

A prison cell. DENNIS enters. SARAH is sat.

DENNIS You know what I want to do? I mean there's people out there who would stop me doing this but I want to tear you to fucking pieces you know that? I want to rip you to shreds to do to you what you did to her, I told them you were protesting your innocence that's the only reason they let me see you, I told them this was a diplomatic matter that's why they let me in, but they'll find out in a few minutes you're guilty as hell.

SARAH stares at him.

Why? That's what I want to know. I'll never see you again I never want to, I wish they would kill you in this country, I don't care what happens to you. But I want to know why.

Beat.

They found her in pieces. Cut up with a knife.

Beat.

SARAH You believe in God.

DENNIS Yes I do.

SARAH I know you believe there are good things and evil things in this world. I know you believe that.

DENNIS Good things and evil things.

SARAH Good people and evil people.

DENNIS Yes.

SARAH And what would you do if you found out there was an evil person in your house if there was an evil person in the world that you had created, people say it about Hitler what would his parents do if they had known, well I knew, I knew what she was going to grow up to be, there was nothing good about her. This is better, I may have taken a life Dennis, but I've saved more. I've saved so many people from the things she would do.

DENNIS You don't have any idea what she –

SARAH But what if I did. What if I could?

DENNIS You can't.

SARAH But if I could –

DENNIS You DON'T

SARAH ...

She breaks down.

Dennis. I just want you to reach out and touch me, to say that although you may hate me and I might be the most loathsome creature that ever walked, that you still see me as a human being, as someone who deserves at least, at least some compassion.

DENNIS I should be working. I should be in there – they're going to invade and I was a voice holding them back but now I have no influence and we will go to this wrong war, and many people will die and it won't be because of Ruby it will be because of you. You're the evil one.

SARAH Please. Touch me then you can go.

He stands.

There was a reason.

There was a reason I did it.

She looks at him. Crying now.

Eight

EDITH *plays piano as the scene gathers. She watches on the computer.*

We see everyone outside waiting, hoping.

Number 10. From two different doors enter STEPHEN and JOHN.

RUTH John.

She holds out her hand. JOHN sees STEPHEN.

JOHN We said it was just going to be us.

RUTH I thought you wouldn't mind if Stephen joined us for a while.

We all know each other and it's been such a long time, I'd prefer to have him with us.

JOHN Stephen. Are you alright?

STEPHEN I'm fine,

JOHN You're ill.

STEPHEN A little.

JOHN Cancer.

STEPHEN What?

JOHN Is it cancer?

STEPHEN Well they haven't completed the tests yet, but we're not here to play doctors.

Beat.

RUTH Shall we sit? They've given us coffee, tea.

JOHN Tea.

RUTH No milk is it? Stephen?

STEPHEN Coffee.

RUTH Coffee. Lovely. Coffee for me. So.

The tea and coffee is handed out.

RUTH *sits down. A moment of looking at each other.*

Where did you go?

JOHN Away.

RUTH Away?

JOHN Yes.

RUTH Where?

JOHN

RUTH Everyone thought you were dead.

JOHN I know.

RUTH There were people who cared about you.

JOHN Not that many. I don't have any family.

RUTH What about your friends.

JOHN I'm not here to talk about Simon.

RUTH Alright let's talk about you instead. Where did you go?

Pause.

John it's okay. We've got time. I just wanted to know where you'd been. I don't see why it's a secret. I want to get a sense of who I'm talking to.

JOHN You know me Ruth. I'm the same person, I've gone away, I've grown up, I've worked a few things out but other than that I'm exactly the same. But what about you? When you were younger we thought you were amazing, you were the radical in your party, a Tory but campaigning for all the right things – higher taxes for those that could afford it, social improvement, closing tax loopholes, forcing the banks and the corporations to pay their fair share, we hated your party but we loved you –

RUTH I know.

JOHN – but you've been in power two years and what have you done?

RUTH It's not as simple as / you might think.

JOHN I'm not saying it's simple, I know it's difficult. It's hard work even when you try but I've studied everything you've done and it's compromise. The easy route. Again and again. Why? And I think that's what this is today.

RUTH You think war is the easy route?

JOHN There's another way.

STEPHEN She's doing her best.

RUTH Stephen –

JOHN She's old enough to speak for herself Stephen.

STEPHEN You're right, she's old enough, she's an adult, she takes responsibility, she doesn't have the privilege of going off on some extended gap year and then coming back and just *complaining* she has to balance interests she has to find ways of maintaining the economy while also attempting to reduce the gap between rich and poor and all at the same time taking the short-termist increasingly fickle and small-minded electorate with her. It's not as simple as coming in here with a to-do list.

JOHN It's even in the way she speaks. She's lost something.
He looks at RUTH.
Why can't we pay more tax?

RUTH People don't want to.

JOHN Make the case.

RUTH It's been proven.

JOHN It's not been proven. Make the case.

STEPHEN Oh come on John.

RUTH It's been proven that if you increase taxes – if you go to the electorate with that, you'll lose –

JOHN That's not proof.

RUTH It's what's happened.

JOHN It's what's happened recently yes but that's different to proof, just because recent leaders haven't managed to persuade the people why have you given up?

RUTH Oh John you're so vague it's endearing –

JOHN If I'm a parent and I want my child to be able to go to university without feeling like they'll live their whole life in debt, if I want decent education for every child in the country, if I feel uncomfortable with the NHS falling into largely private hands, who can I vote for, where is my candidate?

RUTH John.

JOHN Where's the politicians who question the idea of choice? You're in pain, you need an operation as soon as possible, you don't want to go *shopping*, it's not your job to choose the right person – you don't want choice you want delivery. Where are the politicians demanding all this? Where's the politicians with new ideas? Again and again, less and less, because we're not *naive* any more, because this is the only way that works.

Where are the ideas Ruth, where are the dreams? We should be electing leaders, not managers.

RUTH John – there's something else we should talk about.

JOHN You asked me where I've been. This is where I've been. This is what I want. Where's the politician who does all that?

RUTH John –

JOHN You Ruth. That's who you were, that's what you used to be like, when we sat up till two on New Year's Eve and we had drunk too much whisky and ginger, and you used to smoke a

bit back then too, and you told me, you said you had *nothing to lose* – you weren't one of the boys you were going to shake things up. Well start today. Take the difficult route. Don't go to war.

RUTH Sometimes things don't work out as you planned.

JOHN I know.

RUTH – things we don't intend.

JOHN Of course.

RUTH And sometimes life just gets in the way. Do you understand?

JOHN *I don't want to talk about Simon.*

RUTH I didn't mention *Simon*.

Beat.

JOHN Ruth... It's not too late to actually *do* something people will remember. Something that will change a generation.

STEPHEN It is John.

JOHN No –

STEPHEN It is too late. You think you're suggesting something new? Almost of all of what you're saying is impossible. Higher taxes stifle economic growth that is just a fact, and the twentieth century has proved conclusively, and yes it is proof, that the introduction of a free-market capitalism into a country's system not only raises the quality of people's life, but also intrinsically leads to greater social and political freedom.

JOHN For the rich.

STEPHEN At first, but eventually for all.

JOHN A big eventually, they're still waiting in Russia, South Africa, you could argue we're still waiting here. The chances of rising up the ladder in this country have sharply declined in the last thirty years, you know why –

STEPHEN Yes, yes –

JOHN The free market, smaller government, / less welfare, opportunity –

STEPHEN I could debate that, there's increasing population, decreasing resources. But I thought you were here to talk about Iran?

JOHN I'm here to talk to Ruth.

STEPHEN Ruth's listening aren't you?

RUTH Yes.

STEPHEN She's fascinated by us.

RUTH I like the perspective.

STEPHEN Exactly. Now, John – Iran's nuclear intention is something else completely. You criticise us for saying you're naive, well that's difficult because all you out there, you sound it. You sound like *children*. Your criticism is that this *feels* wrong, well of course it does, it's *war*, people are going to die, war always *feels* wrong, it should feel wrong, but the world is nasty and the civilisation you live in, every single tiny aspect of the western civilisation is built upon the progress and protection that came at the cost of blood, that your ancestors fought for, even though it felt just as *wrong* then. No one wants this to happen, but we have to protect our interests and we have to be intelligent enough and proud enough to say we think our values are better than theirs – our values of freedom, democracy, equality.

JOHN I'd question whether equality is currently / one of our values.

STEPHEN And we have to be strong enough to know that those things are not givens. Good does not always win out, not under the ancient monarchies, not under Stalin, or Hitler. There's no God, no divine justice. We do not inevitably get better, unless we work, unless sometimes we *fight*.
He's unsteady, sweating, overwhelmed.

RUTH Stephen –

STEPHEN I'm fine. Come on! Let's say it, let's come out and proclaim it loud, our ways are better, yes, *better* than theirs.

JOHN Whose?

STEPHEN The Iranian –

JOHN The Iranians'?

STEPHEN The Iranian regime's. Our systems of power and law and the values we have enshrined are morally superior. We don't make our women hide themselves, we don't beat our children, we don't stone adulterers, homosexuality is legal, we give everyone the vote.

We're happy to coexist and agree to differ but not where our moral principles and the bedrock of our culture are at stake. We cannot allow men we wouldn't trust with our sister to have access to a nuclear weapon.

JOHN That sounds a bit racist to me.

STEPHEN Absolutely not.

JOHN Who are these men?

STEPHEN What?

JOHN Who do you imagine these men are? Uneducated stupid, Middle Eastern –

STEPHEN No, sir, no, quite the opposite, over-privileged well-educated middle-class men, who thrive on corruption and torture, who cultivate a culture of hypocrisy and fear, for their selfish desire. There have always been these men.

Overgrown children of the world and they should be disciplined, but you'll let them have the bomb.

JOHN No.

STEPHEN Then what's your alternative?

JOHN It's a different world now Stephen.

STEPHEN Really?

JOHN The world you're describing is the world of the ballot box. Him or her, left or right, valves and switches and binary choices, but to people like me, to us, that way of thinking is ancient. My generation isn't apathetic, we're voting every second of the day – pick up one of these –

He grabs the iPad.

Every second every subject, not simply yes or no, this or that, but millions of views, opinions, solutions, the true complexity of the world and all that's needed to pull it together and progress?

Purpose. Conviction, Belief.

He gives the iPad to RUTH.

STEPHEN How does that stop Iran getting the bomb? You're saying we just sit back and hope –

JOHN We sit forward. We don't raise a fist. Any government can ultimately not govern without consent. Modern technology has given people more information and more organisation than ever before. It is no longer possible for governments to lie. Therefore, armed with the truth, and the capacity to be heard, it won't be long before the people speak out. We do not need to invade. In Tunisia, Egypt, the people spoke together. And the voice of the people is the –

STEPHEN Is the voice of God, and I don't trust either. By all accounts the Muslim Brotherhood are pretty tech savvy John, and from what I saw out my window earlier this year, riots seem easier to organise than ever – talk about a flash mob –

JOHN What I'm saying –

STEPHEN What are you saying?

JOHN We have to believe in something.

STEPHEN Why?

JOHN Because the only message at the moment is money, success, power, and it's like a Big Mac, you're told to eat it, but

afterwards you're still empty. That's why people are violent and lost and rioting. They've not been given a reason to live. I'm not saying God, but we have to have a motivation towards something, a *drive*. Those people in the square think a thousand different things but today there's something they share. That this is wrong and we can be better. I get emails, letters every day now from people across the country, soldiers, businessmen, old women all after something better. A new idea. They don't want this war. The people of Iran do not want this war.

STEPHEN If you allow this technology to get out of control there will be no ideas new or old, everything John, everything will be destroyed. Yes. Armageddon. The end of reality. No light, just darkness. Am I talking your language now? Mystery, apocalypse? I'm told you think dreams have meaning. It's said, coincidence follows you around.

JOHN Maybe.

STEPHEN You said I had cancer. What made you say that?

JOHN I saw it.

STEPHEN Magic?

JOHN There's things we don't know.

Beat.

Ruth believes in God.

Don't you?

Beat

RUTH Stephen, maybe John has a point. Perhaps there are other things we could do.

STEPHEN Ruth?

RUTH You've always been a fan of charging in and kicking up a storm.

Beat.

STEPHEN If we refuse to take control of this now, our grandchildren will look back and see it as the greatest failure of our generation, far larger than climate change, potentially bigger than the two World Wars. Terrorist nuclear explosions in any place at any time. Imagine that, the constant fear of death, any place, any moment, utterly unavoidable. There would be no freedom at all in that world. True freedom is only ensured through leadership and government. We have a parliamentary democracy for a reason. The people cannot be trusted. Nothing good ever came from literally giving power to the people – civil war, atrocity, mob rule. No. Give power to –

He coughs.

RUTH Stephen.

STEPHEN Give power to –

He coughs again.

RUTH Stephen go to the hospital.

She picks up the phone.

Hello.

STEPHEN Give power to *parliament*. To the experts.

RUTH I want a car / and a doctor, at the back door, now.

STEPHEN The people are stupid and the people are dangerous.

They can shout as loud as they want. But –

MARTIN *enters*.

RUTH Martin will you show Stephen out?

MARTIN Of course.

STEPHEN *coughs, then looks at her.*

STEPHEN Keep your head. Don't be drawn.

It's an act.

RUTH Thank you.

STEPHEN *looks at them both, then goes.*

What is it?

JOHN Lung cancer.

RUTH You're guessing, right?

The phone goes.

RUTH *answers it.*

RUTH Yes?

She listens.

Yes.

Yes.

Alright.

She hangs up.

More tea?

JOHN No.

Beat.

They look at each other.

RUTH So I had a kind of breakdown.

You didn't ask so I thought I should tell you, when he died, everything in my life changed as I suppose you would expect, I stopped work, I started just looking into the distance, blanking out. I thought he'd come through the door any second, and reveal it had all been a horrible mistake but no he was gone forever and I knew there had to be a reason. But you told them it was an accident.

JOHN I'm not here to talk about Simon.

RUTH This is about Simon of course it is, of *course* it is, don't you *dare* tell me that you would be out there if it wasn't for him!

You're pretending, pretending you don't have a past and that it doesn't matter. But you can't run away from this. He was so much *better* than you – you talk about belief? He had real belief he had belief in people. What happened?

JOHN Ruth –

RUTH What happened that night John? – you ran away.

JOHN I had to leave.

RUTH You felt guilty.

JOHN There was nothing here for me.

RUTH You never even spoke to me about it.

JOHN You want me to tell you.

RUTH Yes of course.

A tiny beat.

JOHN There was drink, there was smoking.

RUTH He didn't smoke.

JOHN He did.

RUTH You gave them to him.

JOHN That night yes, but he did smoke. There was drink, there was weed, we were out Ruth and that's what students do. We were standing on the stone bridge and he said he thought he should jump in. What would it be like?

RUTH He wouldn't have done that, he wouldn't have suggested it. It was you. That's exactly the sort of thing you would say.

JOHN No. It was his idea.

But I didn't stop him. I could've done. I could've stopped him, but I didn't you're right I thought it would be funny, so I stood back and watched and he was there on the bridge and he jumped in just like they do on May Day in the morning just like we've all seen lots of them do before, but it was

dark and he hit something and there was a scream and I didn't see him after that.

You know what happened after that.

It happened in seconds. He was washed down the river.

RUTH You've never said sorry.

JOHN It wasn't my fault.

Beat.

RUTH What are you doing?

Beat.

JOHN He would've stopped you.

RUTH Don't be ridiculous. You don't know what he would've done.

JOHN I'm not him. I'm nothing like him I agree, but he should've been here, he would've talked to you, you're right I don't know why it happened. I don't see a plan in it. But I imagine a universe right now where he's still alive. I imagine dying and finding that all this was a computer game, a fantasy, a projection and he's still there. I think, bearing in mind how little we know, that there are possibilities.

But if he is gone forever, that means every young man in the Iranian army you kill is gone forever, that means every piece of collateral damage, every woman, every child, is gone forever. This has to stop. He would've told you that. This isn't just about *feeling* this is about the very nature of who we are, the kind of actions that make life worth living. What you're doing is empire, it's territory. I think you know you're making a mistake, and Simon would know it too.

RUTH *tries to pour a glass of water but she can't –*

RUTH You didn't see the baby, the child, you didn't see him grow, he never did *anything* like that until he met you! And now

this – you come here? What will you do if I say yes? If I go to war, what will you tell the people out there?

JOHN I will tell the country to stop work. I will ask them to think of the people of Iran, and bring peace and I will win, Ruth. But I want to go out there and say that you have listened, and we will not bomb Iran, we will instead put all our efforts together into a completely different approach. A new idea. Something that changes this country for good.

RUTH You're threatening me.

JOHN It can't happen.

They look at each other.

RUTH What did he look like, the last time you saw him?

Please. I'm his mother.

This is what I... want. You were there.

You're here now.

So.

What was the last you saw of him?

Beat.

JOHN He stood on the wall on the top of the bridge, and behind him was the night sky. He lifted his arms out to jump, and I then suddenly, I don't know if it was the Moon, or whatever but he was lit up, bright, then he fell, there was a noise, then silence.

RUTH ...

JOHN But in that last moment, before he jumped, he was happy.

RUTH *looks at him.*

The phone rings.

She picks it up.

RUTH Yes?

She picks up her iPad. Looks at it.

Alright. Yes.

Thank you.

She hangs up. Puts the iPad down.

Alright.

You know what I believe in John? The grey area. The bit between. To any difficult problem, there is never a *right* solution, there is only ever the *best* solution. Nothing on Earth is completely pure. I prefer complexity, difficulty, balance. Good and evil? No. Children's words.

Beat.

So this decision, when it's made, it will not ever be completely right, or wrong, it will instead be a matter of judgement.

Beat.

I'm the most popular Conservative leader of this country for decades which you might say is hardly an achievement, but I'm going to try to explain something I think you never understood. Why would a nice person like me be a Tory? Why on earth am I not on the left, like a normal compassionate human being? Do I not care? Am I heartless? No. Of course we have to protect the poor, we have to make sure there's equal opportunity, we have to have compassion and *feeling* and *emotion* but it's not those things that have created everything you see around you. Every piece of clothing, every building, every technology, every free democratic principal and institution has been made possible and paid for not by taxes, in the end, but by the market. How did you get that crowd together.

Facebook. Twitter. Profit-making companies. It's the most basic function of Western civilisation. You go out and you're free to make your way, and if you do well, you're rewarded. That's what makes us happy, and productive and it's my

solution to a nasty world. Hard work, opportunity, and in the end, yes, self-interest, looking after your own.

The golden rule.

Look after your own first. Because if you don't do that you can't help anyone. And that's what I intend to do in this case. As the elected representative of this government, it is my first duty to protect the people of this country and allowing Iran to get nuclear weapons is totally unacceptable. I absolutely believe in progress, and that's what this will be, stopping generations of destruction, death and pain. This isn't about ideology, it's not about Islam or God or right or left, it's about complicated, impure *reality* and protecting the future. Simple as that. In five minutes, I'll call the President and say we're in. Tonight, we begin. And that's it.

JOHN This doesn't make it better. Simon would still –

RUTH Absolutely. He would disagree completely. But you're right. It isn't anything to do with Simon. This is me. Doing my job.
Beat.

JOHN You're going to make the call in five minutes.

RUTH Five minutes yes.

JOHN Then who was that on the phone?

RUTH You're not going to start a general strike, you're not going to go out there and do anything. Look.

RUTH gives him the iPad. As he watches, we see SARAH onstage in an interrogation room.

SARAH I saw him first at the airport, then later, there he was, outside my house. Why was he outside my house? He said sometimes you have to listen to your instinct even when it doesn't seem right, when everyone is telling you the opposite. He knew what I was struggling with, and he said sometimes you have to do what you believe to be right. He told me to watch him speaking. He knew me. He could see.

I did the right thing.

John knows.

I did what was right.

RUTH *switches it off.*

RUTH She killed her daughter with a knife. Cut her to shreds.

Her husband works for the US Embassy and while there's absolutely no way legally that footage should be released to the public, he's very keen. He thinks people should know. So I have a feeling it will be out there in about twenty minutes.

JOHN Ruth, if you believe in what you're doing you don't need to —

RUTH I'm also going to tell my head of communications to circulate everything about Simon — our involvement, the fact you were there, the personal reason for this protest. It will all come out at five o'clock. To be involved in one death might be a mistake but to be involved in both is too much of a coincidence, even for you.

From outside there begins a faint singing. The crowd outside. Beautiful, choral.

She was eleven. Her name was Ruby. She liked reading and ballet.

JOHN I had nothing to do with it.

RUTH I think you make people do stupid things. I think you encourage them to take the brakes off, yes, I think you had something to do with my son's death and I think you had something to do with that little girl's death. You lecture me about compromise, well compromise is safe, compromise is discussion and *thought*. Compromise is experience and making the best possible decision, not the most *exciting*.

This country should have a manager. Look where our leaders took us in the past. It's not about glory and ideologies it's

about finding the solution to our problem, and you don't need belief for that you need *graft*.

The singing's louder now. They hear it.

In twenty minutes your friends will find out. They'll see what she has to say and they'll all have the same thought.

They'll realise they've been conned.

And the singing will get quieter.

JOHN They're stronger than that.

RUTH The singing will get quieter.

And the singing will stop and become individual voices again. Half a million different opinions. They'll all go back, and get on with their lives.

I have to make a call.

Beat.

JOHN A lot of people are going to die tonight.

RUTH I know.

Beat.

JOHN You had the dream too.

RUTH What dream?

JOHN The explosion. The monsters. Every night.

RUTH Of course. It's all I've been thinking about. Of course I dreamt of things like that.

We dream of things that don't exist all the time.

A long pause. They look at each other.

The singing stops.

Eighteen minutes.

Now. If you'll excuse me. I need to call the President.

RUTH *goes, leaving JOHN... he turns... into...*

Nine

Five o'clock – dusk. Trafalgar Square. The sound of the crowd. RACHEL, AMIR, SHANNON, ZIA, MARK and HOLLY wait, fired up. The singing changes back to chanting. 'In Our Name! In Our Name!'

JOHN is led on by two police officers – he looks around. The group expect him to come to them, but instead he goes to where he made the speech before.

It's getting darker now. The crowd sounds fade as they see him.

He steps forward to the microphone.

JOHN It's two minutes to five.

He pauses.

She listened to everything I had to say. But... she told me she's... The bombing will begin overnight.

There's a silence. He checks his watch again.

At five o'clock you're going to receive a message, linking you to a video, and some information. When you watch it, when you read what they have to say, it will make you angry. But before that happens, before you take out your phone and you see what's happened, remember how you feel right now because it's not the object of belief that is important but belief itself. Don't give up. Today we failed, yes, but there will always be failure, and there is so much to do, the terror goes on, the nightmares continue, and men and women and children will die in Iran tonight...

...

This can happen again, because it's about you, not me, it's all about your conviction and the numbers and the passion and –

It's dark by now. Big Ben chimes. As it does, everyone onstage receives a message – in fact the entire crowd receives a message. And we see them in unison take out their smartphones.

Ten

Thousands of lights illuminating thousands of faces in the dark. Chaos, shouting, cars being set on fire, violence, rioting and flames. Fade...

The sound of the cello... taking us into...

ACT FIVE

The cello plays – the twelve stand.

The music finishes and they open their eyes.

RACHEL, AMIR, SHANNON, ZIA, MARK, HOLLY, STEPHEN, RUTH, EDITH, ROB, MARTIN, SARAH.

RACHEL We got a cab home. I don't know what happened to him.

HOLLY I walked round the streets, my hood up cos otherwise –

SHANNON I went home. Watched it on the TV. The Sky coverage was better cos they had more people out. The BBC was like a phone-in.

AMIR They said Trafalgar Square was like a war zone. I thought bearing in mind what's happening tonight, that's an unfortunate way to put it.

RUTH For me, that night was strangely quiet.

Once the order was given, I was updated hour to hour, but the way it works – they just get on with it.

STEPHEN In these final weeks of my life, as I face death, I've thought about whether I would have been prepared to die for others, in war? Would I have made that sacrifice? And the answer is yes, absolutely – to protect the country I love? My way of life? I'm certain. Death is not the worst thing.

EDITH I don't know what's happening to me. Parts of who I am drifting away. I remember something happened recently, when I was outside, something in the ground but... You see the thing is I can't even practise the piano properly, because I can't remember what I've already learnt. I could just be playing the same tune over and over again. The world's a bitch. And that man...

MARK I got a cab, couldn't face going back to my flat, so instead, weirdly I went *home*.

EDITH Best to put an end to it. I've ordered the pills on the internet and it seems quite straightforward. I don't want anyone to worry.

RUTH History will judge, that's what I'm saying, in interviews, again and again. But it won't. Was it worth the loss of life? Is the world better now?

EDITH The strange thing is, I've believed in Heaven my whole life. But now I'm facing it, and with the dreams. Well

RUTH I don't know.

EDITH I'm not so sure.

Beat.

ZIA It took me two days to call her, I was scared cos she's not my usual type I mean I normally go for the pretty ones not that this girl isn't pretty but she doesn't get bored of me which is good she's interested so that's we do Stephen Hawking impressions together? So that's... I mean... Yeah.

HOLLY He can't have gone up to Trafalgar, people would have seen him. The same if he'd gone towards Green Park, so he must've gone down Whitehall, but even then. Maybe he got a cab or something – I called the firms but – that night was –

MARK I'm gutted any of it had anything to do with him, but yeah...

HOLLY I'll keep looking.

MARK Mum was surprised to see me –

HOLLY I'll wait –

MARK – she cleared out the old room, didn't ask too many questions, thank God, just told me about her garden. She's growing peas, apparently.

ZIA Her name's Shannon.

SHANNON I'm starting this course. Zia's idea.

ZIA (*Stephen Hawking impression.*) Shannon! Huh! – She’s doing this course now.

SHANNON Open University. Physics. It’s good. And you get free pens.
Beat.

SARAH Here, my life is simple.

I’m on my own, for protection, because all the others, they know what I did. It’s simple. I wake, dress, pray, read...

MARTIN I quit. Got myself off Twitter, cleared my Facebook account.

SARAH Of course I think of her all the time.

MARTIN Thing was, whenever the Prime Minister talked about the tactics, I saw this look on her face. I don’t think she was ever... certain. I’m going to be a teacher. I want a small life. Don’t think there’s anything much anyone can do, except get through it.

AMIR We both still wake in the night, facing each other.

RUTH At night, I think of Simon, of course.

RACHEL We’ve talked about a baby but –

RUTH What would he say?

MARK I found this old video of me as a kid. I’ve got this stick and I’m digging a hole in the back garden. Dad’s filming it. But anyway I watched it and I thought how did he, this kid, smiling, mucking about with a stick... how did he... become... this...

AMIR If we have a kid, he could have the dreams too.

MARK What happened?

AMIR And we wouldn’t know. Cos, well, kids scream anyway.

SARAH No. I don’t sleep well. How could I?

RUTH Sometimes at night, I pick up the phone and go to call someone.

SHANNON It's on the news every night.

RUTH I always hang up in the end. Go back to bed.

SHANNON Every time I see it, the war, I think was there something we could've done? Something better –

AMIR It's different when you know people out there, who are in the houses, with the lights out at night, hiding under the table. I don't know what I was thinking.

SHANNON And the dreams –

AMIR It was wrong. Of course. Rachel's still out every day, campaigning.

RACHEL Problem is you start to think what it's all going to look like, in twenty years? How does this ever stop? We need something...

RUTH I lie awake, scared of what I'll see when I close my eyes. Dennis was right.

SHANNON I think the dreams are something to do with –

RUTH I do need someone. I do.

Beat.

ROB I thought I'd know. And I thought he'd help. Cos I'd worked out it was going to be important to know and that's what got me listening to him in the first place. I thought he'd help me especially with these fucking dreams. I thought it was nerves. Going out there for the first time. Made sense.

So I followed him on the TV. On the internet. The protest. The speeches. The riot. And then...

Then obviously. Decision made. We were sent in. And. It was. Well. What you saw.

And then pretty soon, we're in charge, security you know, all lessons learned from Iraq, while they're training the police force up, sorting out the interim government and I'm on this road block, and I'll tell you I've got this far and I haven't

had to actually shoot at anyone. Covering fire but not actually at, anyone, and I'm on this road block and suddenly there's this woman and she's coming towards me, and she's wearing this massive fucking black thing, and her eyes are – are – anyway I'm under orders to not let anyone near this cos they might be you know suicide bombers all that, so I shout to her stay back, and she's a good way off but she's still coming towards me. She's running now and I've got the gun up and I'm gesturing and shouting, like get back but she's coming towards me faster and faster and by now I can see her eyes, and this is the moment yeah I thought this is what the dreams are about and everything that he was saying.

Cos I'm looking at her eyes, in fact that's pretty much all I can fucking see – her eyes, and I can't tell... and I can't tell if her eyes are scared, and she's running away, towards us, for help and she's good, maybe she's a mother with children and these are just the eyes of a loving woman. Or if no – they're angry and she's running at us, to kill us and she's well trained and she's fucking... evil. I... I don't know. But I've got to make a decision *now* and the training is just fucking do it, and I'm doing all what you're supposed to but in the end we can't risk it so I open fire and shoot her across the chest and one goes in her head and she's down, quickly. Lots of blood.

You know what's... what I can't deal with?

I still don't know.

Turned out she didn't have a bomb. She did have a knife, but they didn't know if that was self-defence, or to do some proper damage.

So in the end we can't tell. If she was good, or evil.

Why she was running.

And that was it. That's what I wanted to know. From him.

I'm ready to fight. To protect the people I love. My way of life.

But I needed to know what the enemy looked like.

But... now he's gone.

And he's just...

Left us all to – work it out for ourselves.

End.

MEDEA

after Euripides

This version of *Medea* was first co-produced by Headlong, Glasgow Citizens Theatre and Watford Palace Theatre, in association with Warwick Arts Centre, at the Citizens Theatre, Glasgow, on 27 September 2012, before touring. The cast was as follows:

WORKMAN	Paul Brendan
SARAH	Lu Corfield
CARTER	Christopher Ettridge
JASON	Adam Levy
PAM	Amelia Lowdell
ANDREW	Paul Shelley
MEDEA	Rachael Stirling

The character of TOM was performed by local boys at each touring venue.

<i>Director</i>	Mike Bartlett
<i>Designer</i>	Ruari Murchison
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	Johanna Town
<i>Composer and Sound Designer</i>	Tom Mills

Characters

MEDEA

PAM

SARAH

WORKMAN

CARTER

JASON

ANDREW

TOM (*non-speaking*)

Note on the Text

(/) means the next speech begins at that point. (–) means the next line interrupts.

(...) at the end of a speech means it trails off. On its own it indicates a pressure, expectation or desire to speak.

A line with no full stop at the end indicates that the next speech follows on immediately.

A speech with no written dialogue indicates a character deliberately remaining silent.

ACT ONE

Scene One

The afternoon. A street on a new-build estate. Medea's house – number 36. Her house is a reasonable four-bed. White door, double glazing. Built around 1996. The curtains are drawn.

A lazy autumn day. Weak sunlight. A window is opened on the house on the left.

A WORKMAN is building a wall.

A small tinny radio plays a song in the current top five.

PAM arrives, speaking on the phone, using a Bluetooth headset. She finishes her phone conversation outside the front of the house.

PAM Yeah I never really liked the name Jason, it's always made me think of Jason Donovan or that one from Take That. Bearded, yeah. What?

No I know he hasn't actually got a beard but it's the same *feeling* you know, you knew I was at school with him?

Yeah well I was, so I feel torn cos obviously recently I've been closer to her.

Yeah I come and see her every week, that's what I'm saying, that's where I am now. She gave me a key.

Least I can do.

What?

The radio's distracting her. She looks round accusingly.

No not good, no, she doesn't go out, she keeps the curtains closed. It's the wedding tomorrow so maybe once that's out the way. Look I'm here so –

Her name, is Kate, I don't know where he met her, she's the daughter of their landlord so maybe it was –

Twenty-one.

Yeah, and it's just – embarrassing, that it's someone like that, that he runs off with, you know, it's embarrassing that he left her for a girl like that. And she doesn't really trust anyone, only me I think, I suppose it's different, we've all got old friends haven't we, we've all lived here for ages but she –

She reaches into her pocket, pulls out a key.

I better go in, I'm here now.

Yeah. Yeah I will, if she asks.

Yeah I will. Bye.

Bye.

PAM opens the front door and goes inside. As she does – there's the sound of scraping from inside.

As the door closes, the WORKMAN watches her. He switches the radio back on as –

TOM enters – he walks across and looks at the WORKMAN.

WORKMAN Hello.

TOM moves closer to the wall, interested.

A moment.

SARAH enters, finding the key to MEDEA's house.

SARAH Come on Tom. Tom! Don't bother the man, he's busy.

TOM glances at the WORKMAN then turns and takes SARAH's hand, as together they go inside MEDEA's house.

As they do – a scraping sound.

Scene Two

The front room.

The door opens into an open-plan hall, front room. It's perfectly furnished in high-end Ikea/Habitat furniture and fittings. A single lamp on. There's cornflakes scattered all over the surface – the box turned on its side.

PAM is filling up the kettle.

PAM Oh – hello.

SARAH Hi.

Upstairs, we hear footsteps. A kind of prowling.

You must be –

PAM I'm Pam.

SARAH Right. Yes.

A scraping of a piece of furniture across the floor. SARAH looks up.

PAM puts the kettle on.

PAM I just stopped in to see how she was.

SARAH That's nice of you.

PAM Hello Tom! How are you?

TOM just stares at her.

How was school?

He pulls out a games console, jumps on to the sofa and starts playing it.

Okay.

You must be Susan.

SARAH Sarah.

PAM Sarah, she mentioned you, described you –

SARAH Described me?

PAM You live next door?

SARAH Next door that's right –

PAM That way? Because I *love* that house.

SARAH That way.

PAM Oh. Well that's a nice house too.

SARAH They're all the same.

PAM Built the same yes –

SARAH Exactly identical.

PAM Built identical that's right but it's amazing what people *do* with them. Isn't it?

SARAH What do you mean?

PAM I mean the one that way, the other way from yours, they've got ivy on the front. A little path. Now they're building a wall, I suppose what I mean is you can tell whoever lives in that house, they've got taste.

SARAH They've got money.

PAM Not a huge amount or they wouldn't be living here.

SARAH I don't like it.

PAM Do you not Susan?

SARAH Sarah.

PAM You don't like that house then Sarah?

SARAH No.

 No I don't.

A scratching from upstairs, they both look up.

PAM But anyway, you're helping her out, that's kind.

SARAH I see Tom home from school every afternoon while she's –

PAM Every afternoon?

SARAH Just while she's –

PAM Right.

SARAH Yeah.

PAM You take time off work then?

SARAH I only work mornings so –

PAM Just mornings. You're part-time?

SARAH Job share.

PAM I'd love to be able just to work mornings.

SARAH Well I'm very lucky.

PAM Yes.

SARAH You're not at work now?

PAM As her colleague they didn't mind if I leave a little early to pay her a visit, it's a compassionate company they care about their employees, they don't mind at all if I stop by sometimes.

SARAH You've spoken to her then?

PAM What?

SARAH You said she described me to you.

PAM A couple of days ago yes.

SARAH I haven't seen her in weeks.

PAM We often catch up – you haven't seen her?

SARAH Whenever I come in she's upstairs.

PAM Really? Whenever you come in.

Well.

Beat.

SARAH When she described me, what did she say?

PAM I'm sorry?

SARAH When she described me – you said she described me?

PAM Just... what you looked like –

SARAH Which was?

PAM She mentioned your hair.

SARAH What?

PAM That it was... brown. Nice...

SARAH Anything else?

PAM She used the word spiky.

SARAH My hair's not –

PAM That wasn't about your hair.

SARAH Oh. Right.

PAM Yeah.

SARAH Well.

PAM She said you took offence easily.

SARAH What did she mean by that?

PAM She didn't mean it in a bad way I'm sure.

SARAH She's not herself I know but I don't think I'm –

PAM She's in a state at the moment and it's up to us, if we can, if at all possible, to suck it up and not complain and just be there for her after everything that's happened.

SARAH I know that.

PAM She needs support.

SARAH Exactly, that's why I pick up Tom.

PAM I'm sure you understand that when she says these things about you, it's just transferring her anger.

SARAH These things? What else?

PAM Hmm?

SARAH What else does she say about me?

PAM Oh it doesn't matter.

SARAH What?

PAM Just... ridiculous –

SARAH What?

PAM I mean you're not *short*, look at you, that's the sort of thing I mean she called you *short* but you're really not.

SARAH You're a friend from work.

PAM Old friend yes, I've known Jason since school, then ended up working with Medea, so we've seen a lot of each other over the years.

SARAH Good friend.

PAM We've become good friends, yes, yes we have, particularly in recent weeks.

SARAH She said she didn't have anyone.

PAM I'm sorry?
A scratching from upstairs.

SARAH When I offered to take Tom to school and pick him up she said that would be good because none of the friends she thought she had from years ago or from work, none of them were real friends and she didn't have anyone she could trust.

PAM Oh.

SARAH But as you say –

PAM I mean I work hard all day so –

SARAH She says these things.

PAM Maybe I'm not around as much as I'd like to be –

SARAH I'm sure she doesn't mean it.
Just transferring her anger.

The most important thing is that we understand.

PAM ...

SARAH

SARAH *smiles*.

So how did she look? When you saw her. When I drop Tom off I call for her but I never get an answer. I mean I can hear she's up there but...

Then Tom runs off to play, so I don't...

I don't...

I just slip out, mostly.

I don't want to intrude.

I don't like the name Jason, it makes me think of hair gel.

This girl he's gone off with, she's only nineteen.

PAM Twenty-one.

SARAH I heard she was nineteen.

PAM Twenty-one I believe.

SARAH Well that's bad enough anyway isn't it? I mean whether it's twenty-one or nineteen.

PAM It's twenty-one –

SARAH – doesn't make much difference she's still young, still a child in many ways –

PAM Not really –

SARAH – in the ways that matter, I mean she's pretty of course she is, you can see why he's attracted to her, she's a good-looking young woman, but why she'd go for him I don't know. Surely she could find someone her own age?

PAM She doesn't want someone her own age. Boys are boys. She likes the power of a man I expect. When I was twenty-one there was a bloke, took me out in his Saab.

I'm going to the wedding.

Got a invite so.

SARAH You –

PAM I haven't told her. No need.

Beat.

SARAH She's got good legs.

PAM Medea?

SARAH This girl.

PAM Kate. That's her name – the new girl –

SARAH She's in the paper today, won some dancing thing – wearing her costume like on *Strictly* and you could see she's got really good legs.

Three loud bangs.

I'm never sure about leaving her with...

She means TOM.

I'm never sure about leaving them on their own.

PAM What do you mean?

SARAH

PAM He fend for himself. There's pizzas in the freezer, he's got his games, and he does his homework, he's all right.

SARAH I don't know.

PAM She still loves him, still cuddles him I think –

SARAH Yes but he seems different.

PAM They're very close –

SARAH He never...

PAM Tom?

Tom?

Your mum still cuddles you doesn't she?

TOM *gets up and goes upstairs. We hear the door slam.*

SARAH Does he still visit? Jason. Does he come and see his son?

PAM I don't think so.

A smash from upstairs – then music plays – we mainly hear the bass frequencies. And there's a banging movement. Somehow backwards and forward.

SARAH What's that?

PAM She rolls around in bed. I don't think she's doing herself too much damage but there's this expensive wallpaper she's scratching off the walls. I caught a glimpse last time I was here. And the music – I hate this music normally but it seems to calm her down. Music means more when you're in trouble doesn't it?

The noise.

I'd call the hospital but they might take him away –

SARAH The hospital? You think she's –

PAM They might put her in somewhere and I don't want that on my...

SARAH But if you really think she's got to that point –

PAM I don't want anyone blaming me.

Maybe we should just leave them for the night.

Let her calm down.

I don't mind if you want to leave me to it.

I don't mind Susan.

SARAH Sarah.

PAM I don't mind if you want to leave me to it.

Not being funny but.

Perhaps she's waiting till you've gone?

The noise continues.

SARAH Medea?

The banging stops.

Medea?

SARAH ventures closer to the stairs.

It's Sarah.

I'm going to come up and see how you are. Yes?

The door opens upstairs and the music is suddenly louder.

All right?

I'm coming upstairs.

The music stops. This makes SARAH wait, halfway up the stairs. A moment, then the door upstairs closes.

SARAH backs off, and down the stairs comes MEDEA. She's in her thirties, pale, but much more normal-looking than we might have expected. She's obviously been crying, but has somehow pulled herself together very quickly.

MEDEA Sarah. Pam. Thanks for bringing Tom back has he gone up to his room already? It's that game, he sits in his bed and plays it all night, I don't know what it is I can only hear the noises, it's all guns and girls I think, shooting, violence, but that's what boys like isn't it? Always has been. Do either of you want a cup of tea? I was going to make one.

Yes? Tea?

PAM I put the kettle on.

MEDEA You put the kettle on?

PAM Yes.

MEDEA Why?

PAM I tried to call. I thought you might want tea so I...

MEDEA *goes into the kitchen area and puts the kettle on again.*

MEDEA I expect they're all saying things, I keep the curtains shut because a few days ago, I was in here, sat there, and I wasn't very happy, I mean you wouldn't expect me to be would you? I was watching a film, one of those Richard Curtis ones, and it got to the bit where – it was *Four Weddings* and it got to the bit where he reads the poem out well it's the funeral, clearly, and I was crying – I'm a bit emotional at the moment and anyway I looked up and across the road this woman is just openly staring at me, through the window. And I know her. It's Teresa, used to work with me, you remember her. Pam? You remember her? Do you?

PAM Teresa?

MEDEA Yeah. Blonde.

PAM Blonde?

MEDEA Big hands.

PAM Oh. Tall.

MEDEA Tall with big hands that's it –

PAM Thought she moved to Croatia?

MEDEA But anyway, she hasn't come to the door to see me, she's just looking in the window, she doesn't even live round here, don't know what she's – anyway so I closed the curtains, and never opened them again, it's the only thing about this house, it looks right on to the street not so good when you're having a breakdown. Milk Pam isn't it?

PAM You're not having a breakdown.

MEDEA Milk?

PAM You're getting better, slowly but surely.

MEDEA Pam do you want some fucking milk or not?

PAM Yes please.

MEDEA Sarah?

SARAH Thank you Medea yes please.

MEDEA And no sugar for either of you.

PAM No.

SARAH No sugar that's right.

MEDEA Yeah so I expect you've all been saying I'm mad. I expect you're chatting, saying I've gone mental. But what am I supposed to do? If I went back to work and just got on with things, you'd say I wasn't dealing with it properly, if I stay in, you think I'm a recluse. Men don't have this problem they can do what they want but women, *women* – whatever we do it's irrational.

Emotional. Boo hoo.

SARAH No one's talking about you actually Medea we all just –

MEDEA And the fact I'm not from round here, that doesn't help, I know you thought I never played my part in the community, but I tried. Even though I was working long hours, and didn't have much support from Jason, I did my best, but even so you saw me as an outsider, because you lot when you were kids you went to school together didn't you? Or Guides or tennis club or something you know something like that you all went to *parties* and *got off*, you all know each other from forever ago. There. Tea. Help yourself.

She drops the mugs of tea heavily on the counter in front of the women. They take them.

SARAH Actually we've only just met –

MEDEA You're not better than me. None of you.

SARAH We don't think we –

MEDEA I don't judge you, I honestly don't.

SARAH Of course you don't judge –

MEDEA But you've always thought I was stuck-up, the way those mothers stared at me when I brought that buggy into playgroup.

SARAH That must've been years ago –

MEDEA Or the dress I wore to the Christmas party, you remember, Jacqui didn't just stare like you did, after enough gin she said it up front, told me no one liked me cos I was a 'posh bitch wearing a fuck-me dress'.

PAM Jacqui's difficult.

MEDEA I could've torn her face off right there and then – Anyway, bearing in mind all that and what's happened, why should I give a shit about anything any more? Bet they're all loving it, what happened to me. She's in the paper, that girl. Did you see?

Hello – *question*. Did you see?

PAM Sarah did.

SARAH Yes I did.

MEDEA Her hair. Teeth. Her fucking... sequins.

So why should I bother with any of it any more?

It's shit being a woman. Sorry but it is.

She cleans the surface in the kitchen, occasionally stopping to drink tea.

I'm supposed to rise above it. I know. Be strong. A modern woman. Hey sister go sister all the single fucking ladies – I know that's what I'm supposed to be but –

She gives up and drops the cloth and the detergent on the ground.

I'd rather be a man. Any man. I'd rather be a man in the worst possible situation, a man who gets sent to war, is shot at, and starved and raped and maimed, than be a woman. I

know I'm not supposed to say that – it's probably offensive but fuck it. How's the tea?

SARAH Good.

PAM Perfect.

SARAH You make a fantastic cup of tea.

MEDEA Yeah I do I know I do.

PAM Medea, you need to get outside a bit, some fresh air would do you good –

MEDEA I'd be good in a war. They should put me in one right now. The way I feel at this moment, put me on a battlefield and I'd massacre the lot of them. Shred them to pieces with my nails and teeth like some kind of carnivore.

SARAH Medea –

MEDEA growls at them. They look worried, then she laughs.

MEDEA I can say stuff like that I can say what I like, if you don't like it, you can go.

Actually yes, do, can you go please I've had enough. Sorry. But. Sorry.

PAM Medea we're here to help you.

MEDEA No come on. Tea's over. I'll show you out. I'll even do that. Come on.

Beat.

PAM All right.

PAM and SARAH leave the house. MEDEA follows them and stands on the doorstep.

MEDEA Thanks for stopping by.

PAM Not a problem, I'll see you next week.

MEDEA All right. Bye then –

SARAH Medea.

MEDEA ...

SARAH I understand.

MEDEA What?

SARAH If what happened to you had happened to me. I'd feel exactly the same.

MEDEA Right.

SARAH Yeah.

MEDEA *MEDEA sees CARTER approaching.*

MEDEA Oh – oh no.

SARAH What?

Scene Three

CARTER enters. He is a man in his fifties.

MEDEA You can't come in Nick go away go on piss off leave me alone.

CARTER It's my house.

MEDEA My home.

CARTER Not any more.

MEDEA For *years*.

CARTER No, not according to anyone except you.

Anyway I don't want to come in, I dread to think what you're getting up to in there. Are you all right?

MEDEA What?

CARTER Your eyes.

MEDEA I don't know what you mean.

CARTER Your skin. You should call someone.

PAM There's nothing wrong –

CARTER I'm serious, red skin like that doesn't mean good things
you're drinking too much probably blotches like that.

SARAH Make sense if she was.

CARTER Are you her friends?

PAM Technically a colleague but recently –

CARTER You should look after her.

SARAH Sorry who are you?

CARTER Take her out for a walk sometimes.

PAM Nick Carter, he owns the house.

SARAH Oh.

MEDEA What do you want?

Beat.

CARTER Okay. I don't like this situation of course I don't, but it is
what it is and we have to move on now, all right? As you
well know, you're supposed to be out.

MEDEA I am, look, I'm out, outside for a change. Fresh air. Hmm.
See? This is progress.

CARTER I served fair notice, you had the letter the man gave it to you,
you signed for it. I know you've read it, the tenancy expired
a month ago and has not been renewed.

SARAH You can't just kick her out.

CARTER No. You're absolutely right whoever you are –

SARAH I live next door –

CARTER I can't *just* do anything, she's got to have a substantial period
of notice to find somewhere else and I've given her that, and
more. She's had two months before the expiration, it's
another month since that date passed and yet she's still here.
All the paperwork's in Jason's name anyway. I could send

round the police, and I will, if I have to, but I thought I'd come and... speak to you myself. Give you a chance to avoid all that.

You need to go. I've had enough. It was rented furnished so most of it's mine anyway, it's just a case of packing a bag. Either you leave right now, or I'll have you evicted.

MEDEA Right now?

CARTER Yes.

Pause.

MEDEA I've lived here ten years.

CARTER Things have changed.

MEDEA My home.

CARTER I arranged the lease on this house with Jason. And now he's with Kate, and we... we want it back so you need to go.

MEDEA They're not going to move in here?

CARTER Well probably not, no but –

MEDEA Don't think your daughter would want that.

CARTER No you're right she wouldn't but that's not the point, it's the principle, yes? It's nothing against you personally – I don't understand what the problem is, there's nothing special about this place, they're all the same, all the houses, identical.

PAM It depends what you do with them.

MEDEA Right – the floor, the kitchen, the door handles, he says he helped choose everything and that's true he helped me, he helped *me*, it was my decisions in the end, not his, my home, I've lived longer here than anywhere before he's throwing his own son out –

CARTER I'm surprised you don't want to leave. MEDEA

MEDEA

CARTER

MEDEA I like it.

CARTER This isn't Jason's decision it's mine. Pack a bag, I'll come back in an hour and you'll be gone.

MEDEA Why?

CARTER What?

MEDEA You've got other houses in town, better ones, I'm managing the rent just about, Jason and your daughter they'll get a much better house than this, if you've got anything to do with it, we could both live in our different houses, so why make me go?

CARTER Because...

Pause.

Because you scare the shit out of me.

And my daughter. You shouted at her in the street.

MEDEA

PAM Shouted?

CARTER This must've been when you were still venturing outside. It was a few weeks ago when Kate was with her friends. She told me, and she's a strong person and very responsible adult but also, she's *sensitive*.

PAM What did you say?

CARTER She's become frightened to go out, by herself, because of you. The threats you made.

MEDEA I was angry.

PAM What? What did she say?

CARTER You don't want to know.

PAM Okay but I do.

SARAH Maybe it's none of our business.

PAM Oh come on – What happened? Medea, we're friends –

MEDEA It doesn't matter.

Beat.

CARTER The sad thing is you're educated, driven, exactly the sort of woman I'd employ, and would do well. You used to have a job, a good job, you're better than most people in this town, you run rings round all of them.

MEDEA That's why I'm a threat.

CARTER Exactly. And that's the reason I don't want you just out of this house, I want you a long way away. What about your parents? They'd take you in, surely.

MEDEA My parents are dead.

CARTER Or wherever it is you come from.

Friends? No?

Some distant family? You've really got no one?

MEDEA Intelligent yes, exactly, that's the problem. No one likes clever women. Men feel threatened and other women get bitchy. Most women *hate* clever women. Worst thing I ever did was getting smart.

Pam hates it.

PAM What?

MEDEA That I'm clever. Never liked it, and it's not jealousy, it's the same as you. It's that she simply doesn't trust clever women, underneath she's sure they're always up to something.

That's what you think isn't it?

PAM No. What?

MEDEA That I'm always saying one thing, thinking another.

CARTER Well are you?

MEDEA Maybe. Don't know. Maybe. See?

SARAH I don't mind clever women.

MEDEA You? You don't even notice.

SARAH ...

MEDEA But you should trust me Mr Nicholas *Nicholas* Carter, because you're a sporting man, you're all in favour of 'fair play', you didn't want this to happen, it's true, you're absolutely right, you've given me time to leave and I ignored it completely. I don't hold anything against you it's Jason I want to murder in a brutal and horrific way. I know you're just trying to do the right thing.

CARTER Exactly.

MEDEA I'm not going to do anything to you I stay in the house mostly these days I like it better inside so don't be frightened.

CARTER What about Kate?

MEDEA What?

CARTER What you said. Her liver.

PAM Her *liver*?

Beat.

MEDEA I'm sorry. It was stupid.

He looks at her.

CARTER I can't trust you. Especially now you've calmed down. When you were angry I knew you meant what you said. But like this...

He's trying to work her out.

She smiles.

Laughs.

No. You have to go. I'm sorry.

MEDEA Give me a day.

CARTER You've had three months.

MEDEA One day more, then I'll be gone.

PAM There's a room at mine you could have for a night if –

SARAH No, Medea, you've got rights he can't just –

CARTER One day? No. Tomorrow's their wedding.

MEDEA I'm not invited.

CARTER Of course you're not, the point is I wanted you gone long before it happens.

 It's going to be a special day.

 MEDEA *suddenly starts laughing. They look at her.*

MEDEA Sorry – it's just the idea of those two?... did he ask your permission?

CARTER Yes.

MEDEA And you agreed?

CARTER ...

MEDEA Why?

CARTER She loves him.

MEDEA I'm sure she does.

CARTER Yeah.

Beat.

MEDEA Tom's going to the wedding, Jason wanted that, so we can't leave until afterwards, but I promise while he's there, I'll pack our things and in the afternoon when it's all over, we'll go, both of us, for good, we'll go a long way away.

 I just need to find a place. Make sure we've got a roof over our heads at least... so... just give me a day.

 I'm sorry.

 I'm serious.

 This is me. Actually begging you.

A moment.

CARTER If you're still here tomorrow evening, I'm calling the police.

He goes.

A moment.

MEDEA goes to the front wall, sits, takes out a packet of cigarettes, and lights one.

Smokes. The WORKMAN stops and leans over.

WORKMAN Excuse me...

She gives him a cigarette.

He pulls out a lighter. Lights it.

They share a smile.

That bloke?

MEDEA What about him?

WORKMAN Wanker.

MEDEA Yep.

MEDEA smiles. The WORKMAN leans against his wall.

SARAH and PAM aren't sure what to do.

They come and stand near her.

PAM Medea...

MEDEA I'm a witch.

SARAH What?

MEDEA I make bad things happen. If I want to.

SARAH Are you serious? A witch?

MEDEA I've got a hat somewhere.

PAM Look –

MEDEA All right I haven't got a hat, but I'm telling you I can sit here and wish it and before long Jason will mysteriously trip

coming down the stairs in his new house and fall on the Dyson and impale himself, or the two of them will be driving to some bar he's taking her to, some young place he thinks is good and the car will strangely slip on some out-of-season black ice straight into the path of a large lorry which will send pieces of metal through both of them, cutting her throat killing her instantly but piercing the side of his head just enough that he has brain damage and lives the rest of his life as a vegetable. Or maybe he'll light one of his fucking cigars in the garden and accidentally set fire to his shirt like a twat which will burn him alive and keep on burning no matter what anyone puts on to it, you see the thing is I'm magic and I can make these things happen and the world's only given me evil lately so I'm just giving it some proper evil back. I'm not just bitter, I'm twisted and I'm magic, and I don't need a hat, because I've got it in my bones.

They're going to die in some way horrible. Both of them. I can feel it.

PAM What? MEDEA

MEDEA

PAM He's right I don't know when you're serious. What plan?

MEDEA

PAM I should get home. Will you be all right?

MEDEA *finishes her cigarette.*

MEDEA Yeah. Busy now. I've got packing to do.

A moment.

PAM All right. Well... If you need somewhere to stay. For a night.

Call me. Yeah?

Bye.

PAM *walks off.*

SARAH Medea.

If you want to talk, just come round, knock on the door.

I'm sure we can sort it out.

Just come round.

SARAH goes into the house next door. MEDEA stubs her cigarette out on the ground.

The WORKMAN starts humming.

MEDEA looks at him, then goes inside the house and shuts the door.

The WORKMAN puts on the radio which perfectly matches his humming – 'Aladdin Sane' by David Bowie.

Scene Four

Inside in the open-plan kitchen/living room, MEDEA is making dinner, badly. The radio on.

TOM sits at the small table, waiting, watching.

MEDEA takes out four fish fingers from a frozen bag and puts them under the grill, on full heat.

Then she chops up carrots carelessly, and throws them into a pot of boiling water.

Slowly smoke starts pouring out of her grill. Ignoring it, she takes peas out of the fridges, rips them open, peas go everywhere. She puts them in the boiling water.

The grill is by now really smoking.

She puts two plates on the table, one for her and one for TOM.

She takes the grill pan out. The fish fingers are charcoal, and smoking.

She takes it to the table, using a fork she puts two on TOM's plate and two on hers, then drops the grill on the floor.

Goes back to the pan, takes it off the heat, brings it over to the table.

Then puts her hand into the boiling water and pulls out carrots and peas and puts them on the plate. Her hand becomes raw with the heat.

TOM just watches her.

She tries to get every pea and carrot out of the water.

Eventually she gives up and puts the pan on the side.

Then adjusts the lighting to a lamp, and sits with TOM.

Smiles.

TOM doesn't.

Outside the sun sets.

ACT TWO

Scene One

Outside the house. 9 p.m. It's dark. A fluorescent street light is on. Television plays in the front room. Lights on in windows.

JASON arrives and watches. He's in a suit. He waits.

MEDEA emerges, from the house, closing the door behind her.

JASON You knew I was here.

MEDEA I could smell you.

JASON I'm told you got angry today –

MEDEA Not unusual.

JASON – when Nick came round.

MEDEA Yeah it was something to do with you, if only I could remember –

JASON Sarcasm. Okay.

MEDEA – did we used to be married?

JASON You probably could've stayed living here, no one would've minded. It was just because of what you said to Kate that day in the street, I'm still not even sure what it was, no one wants to tell me but she was terrified, and after that her dad wanted you gone for good. What happened? You didn't need to say anything.

MEDEA I didn't want to say anything.

JASON Right –

MEDEA I would have preferred to remain silent I really would –

JASON Then why didn't you?

MEDEA Because it was that or smashing her head through a shop window.

I don't think you understand the extent of my feelings Jason, what happens to me when I have to see her or even think about her.

When she was there across the road I didn't have much choice over what happened and all things considered I think it was the best outcome I think I did all right.

They look at each other.

What do you want?

JASON I'll pay you, something, every month. After you've gone. I'll still do that. I wanted you to know. For both of you.

MEDEA I don't need it.

JASON Yes.

MEDEA I'll work.

JASON Not at the moment look at you.

MEDEA What's that, fifteen seconds before it *starts* – 'look at me' *what?*

JASON I'm not starting that was *concern*.

MEDEA Ha!

JASON I'm saying you don't look well.

MEDEA I'm fine.

JASON No.

MEDEA Actually I'm fine.

JASON Who's looking after you?

MEDEA *Friends.* I'm really good, yoga, this fitness video, I might not leave the house but I've got everything I need in there, *Wii Sports* on the Nintendo, I'm better than ever, telling you.

JASON What happened to your hand?

She covers it.

Let me have a look.

MEDEA Get off. I realised a couple of days ago I've run out of things to call you, I've been through everything, vomit, shit, twat, puss-filled dark hole sordid fucking wank stain man –

JASON Okay –

MEDEA I mean literally every word, every combination, I made a project of it, wrote them down.

JASON Very good.

MEDEA You think it's clever, you think it's *on*, to fuck me over like that, to walk out on your son, to rip us up and then come back to *visit*. You're not seeing him, Tom, if that's why you're here –

JASON No I'm not here to see him –

MEDEA – and actually yeah I've changed my mind, he's not coming to the wedding tomorrow you can do it without him.

JASON I'm here to see you.

MEDEA Why?

JASON

MEDEA I saved your life, in that sea, when you were drowning, I swam out, you were going to die, you had seaweed, in your lungs, and I dragged you to the shore, pulled the weed out, and breathed life back into you. If it hadn't been for me you'd have been dead in a Cretan sea years ago.

JASON Well not really –

MEDEA I wish I'd left you. I wish I'd pretended but actually swum out and laughed as you choked in the water. I'm vindictive like that sometimes as you know, as you've pointed out quite often. Anyway after I save your life, and you recover, and it bonds us together, we have a relationship, I give you a son, move here where you want me to, with all your friends, this little town, not a place I thought I'd end up –

JASON Beneath you is it?

MEDEA Yes, a bit, a bit, yes, but I wanted to be happy so I moved here for you, I go part-time, I do everything you want and what do I get back?

JASON That's not how it works.

MEDEA Apparently it is.

JASON It's not a deal.

MEDEA It's a contract, it's called a marriage *contract* Jason you made promises you broke.

JASON It was all me?

MEDEA We've talked about this.

JASON You had nothing to do with it?

MEDEA Only that I'm bright and educated and I speak my mind. And I got old.

JASON You completely lost respect for me.

MEDEA For good reason seeing as all you wanted was some little girl who'd be pretty and shut up.

JASON You gave up on me long before that and anyway I didn't mean to find Kate but she had an appeal because she doesn't ignore me, she's interested in what I have to say –

MEDEA Ooohhhh –

JASON She doesn't turn up at my work *shouting* –

MEDEA Yeah arrghh the sound of your voice even that tone, it makes my teeth go inside out, I can't even hear the sound, let alone the words.

JASON That's exactly why I left, things like that, what are you talking about? *Your teeth?*

MEDEA Oh – Getting angry, you want to pick up something and throw it? I could go and get that plate, the same one, I got the pieces and glued it back together I don't know why but I spent two hours with some superglue –

JASON I'm sorry how it happened, I'm not proud, but actually it's better, better it's all out –

MEDEA What about your son?

JASON He'll be all right.

MEDEA You think?

JASON A lot of parents separate now, my parents split up when I was his age, it's not ideal but it won't cause any lasting damage –

MEDEA He's not saying a huge amount I don't know if you've noticed.

JASON He'll grow out of that it's just –

MEDEA You don't want him.

JASON Don't *want* him, *of course* I want him –

MEDEA You don't know him, not like I do, he came out of me, he is me, I *am* him, you feel you should be interested but if you never saw him again you wouldn't mind that much, you'd probably forget –

JASON I'll just wait till you're done – *of course I'd mind* –

MEDEA you're happy to give him up give us both up for a younger tighter fuck –

JASON Nice.

MEDEA Sorry but let's call it what it is – shouldn't there be something to strike you down, a moral force, you should be put in prison, there should be social exclusion, disapproval at least, but everyone just says it's a shame but that it happens all the time.

JASON Well it does.

MEDEA Your mate Steve, he came to get your bike from the garage, spoke to me, we had a bit of a thing –

JASON A thing?

MEDEA Not a sex thing – god no –

JASON No?

MEDEA This is *Steve* – no we had a shouting thing and when he got going he seemed proud of you, said you'd done all right with the new one.

JASON I'm sorry about that.

MEDEA *Upgraded.*
Beat.

JASON That's what he said?

MEDEA Yeah.
Beat.

JASON Steve's an idiot.

MEDEA He's a dick.

JASON Yeah a dick completely yes he is.
He shouldn't have said anything like that.

Beat.

But look –

Not that it's the point but actually it does happen all the time.
Sometimes relationships stop working.

MEDEA How grown up of you to help me through this Jason, how
adult of you to be so mature in this difficult time.

JASON No problem, that was often my role as I seem to remember.

MEDEA No don't do that, you liked me being mad, you thrived on
me being unpredictable, you used to say every day was
different with me that it made you feel alive.

JASON Yeah well that was true at the time.

MEDEA Get that with the new one do you, she does a similar thing.

JASON No.

MEDEA This hand. You used to hold it. And my legs. You liked my
legs.

JASON Yeah I did. Good legs.

They look at each other.

You know I haven't got anywhere to go. My parents are
dead, I've got no old friends any more because you didn't
like the ones I had before so I binned them, never spoke to
them, I did that for you, but now there's no one, nowhere to
go.

JASON I never asked you to do anything with your friends.

MEDEA The women at work, they used to say I was lucky. Good-
looking, great dad, solid upright guy. Remember the way
you used to touch the back of my neck? I miss that.

JASON There's things I miss too.

MEDEA Yeah?

JASON Yes.

MEDEA What?

JASON ...

MEDEA Actually no, don't answer, I... I can't...
She looks at him.
Are those new shoes?

JASON Yes.

MEDEA Okay.

JASON What?

MEDEA Nothing.

JASON You don't like them.

MEDEA Not really.

JASON Right.

MEDEA Have you been drinking?

JASON Not yet.

MEDEA I have.

JASON Yeah.

MEDEA Loads.

JASON You should sort yourself out, and I'm not saying this out of anything but consideration but you really need to *wash*, at least – this is too much – things are bad but...
He looks at her – genuinely doesn't understand what's happened to her.
I knew it would be difficult, but it was nine months ago. It's time to –

MEDEA Just nine months? Feels like...
Like –
Don't pretend that this isn't ultimately a selfish thing to do and also don't pretend that this whole thing isn't really down

to sex. You got bored of me, it's basically that, I don't look like the picture on the box any more. I'm wearing out so you want a new one.

Beat.

JASON Let me put a few things straight – firstly, as usual, you're exaggerating. You didn't save my life. Yes I got into trouble, but there were lots of other people ready to help, and you didn't give me the kiss of life after we got to the beach, you tried but I was fine by then and I had to push you off –

MEDEA Okay so you're making things up now, that's interesting –

JASON And there weren't that many sacrifices.

MEDEA You weren't breathing when I got there, you'd *died*.

JASON You didn't give up your friends when you moved here –

MEDEA Er –

JASON You didn't give up your friends.

MEDEA I did.

JASON You didn't give up your friends in London because you didn't have any friends in London.

Did you?

MEDEA What?

JASON You didn't have any friends in London.

MEDEA ...Some.

JASON You had two and you didn't like either of them. And you know as well as I do for a long time it worked. Our life. For a long time. When you first came here, you loved it, you made friends, you loved the house. And then something –

MEDEA appeared.

JASON broke.

MEDEA It was when you met her –

JASON No it was long before that.

MEDEA Since she started sitting on your lap or whatever it is she does, only since she got her legs out in your direction that there's been a problem.

JASON It was long before that.

MEDEA She's the cause. Little fucking –

JASON She's the symptom, it had been going on for years, it was how you treated me, we'd be at a party, I'd tell a story, and it didn't matter which story if it was interesting or funny or not, but if I started, you'd roll your eyes behind me, and everyone would laugh.

MEDEA Your stories are boring.

JASON You never used to think that.

MEDEA Well, ooh, actually, sorry, but –

JASON You got tired of me.

MEDEA – I did?

JASON It was... it started when... Tom was small and we'd go to friends', and you'd never let me hold him.

MEDEA You weren't good with him. He'd cry, whenever you touched him.

JASON I hardly had a chance.

MEDEA He knew, he could smell the sort of dad you'd be probably and wanted nothing to do with it.

JASON Ever since he was born something went wrong. Ever since that moment when he was in your arms, in the hospital bed, and I looked at the two of you, and I stood there for ages, I stood there for a long time, there by the door near the bed watching, waiting for you to look up –

MEDEA What are you talking about?

JASON I stood there waiting and you weren't looking at me you were looking at him.

MEDEA I just didn't know you were there.

JASON No after that almost from the beginning you were playing games.

MEDEA Games.

JASON You didn't seem comfortable, happy, any more. I don't know I don't know what it was maybe you're right and it was me –

MEDEA Yeah it was.

JASON Maybe it was me yes, or maybe it was *you*, but something didn't work, between us, from when we became parents and I think it's to our credit, I actually think we should be pleased at how long we tried, for Tom's –

MEDEA I wasn't *trying* I was happy, I thought we were okay.

JASON You knew of course you did but you ignored it.

MEDEA Then why didn't we ever talk about it if it was so obvious and if you were just trying to do the right thing why didn't we sit down –

JASON I wish we had.

MEDEA Too late because you didn't ever have a conversation with me, instead you just decided to start having sex with someone else –

JASON No.

MEDEA You cut me out entirely.

JASON Yeah.

MEDEA Why did you hide it?

JASON I don't –

MEDEA Why didn't you tell me?

JASON It wasn't sex at first, we were friends, and I tried to stop –

MEDEA Poor you –

JASON I tried but in the end, yes we slept together but even then –

MEDEA Even then –

JASON *Stop it!* Even then I thought maybe it was what I needed and that maybe it would end and we could carry on because I still loved you I still want this to –

MEDEA You were scared of me. That's why you hid it.

JASON *laughs.*

JASON Of course. Everyone's scared of you Medea you're fucking terrifying. Of course that's why I didn't tell you. And anyway I'm pleased it worked out as it did, because it turns out Kate and I love each other, we do, and I know you think it's because she's younger and better-looking or whatever –

MEDEA Cos it is.

JASON But it's not that –

MEDEA Yes it is.

JASON – it's not, actually, it's –

MEDEA It is.

JASON She's kinder.

MEDEA More stupid.

JASON She's just nicer.

MEDEA Nicer?

JASON Yes and Medea you're many things many good things but even you would have to admit that being nice isn't one of them. But I like it. She's generous, and caring and I don't expect you to accept it, I'm aware there's absolutely no way you can understand it and I don't ask you to.

JASON Yes I miss things, I miss Tom and I miss the life we had but at least in the end we're honest. And we're here and we're talking. So please, please, I just want you to –

She spits on him. He sighs, bored of this.

This reaction has become predictable and dull. It's going on too long. You had everyone's sympathy at first. You really did. They hated me, and were completely on your side. But now, they can't see why you haven't put it behind you. Why you're still stuck here. All this, they're starting to find it indulgent. That's what they're saying.

You've got complete freedom to move on.

To do whatever you want.

You don't need to live here. You should start again. Get some dignity back, you should at least try and have some of that.

Look at you.

God.

MEDEA

JASON

Sometimes I think. There's no one else here, so I'll say this.

But sometimes I fucking hate women.

Mostly I don't. Mostly I love them, and adore them and want them. But sometimes, I just fucking hate the high voice, the crying, you know I think maybe we'd be better off without them, if we all could have kids without the hips and the tears and all that, we'd probably be happier.

MEDEA *just looks at him.*

MEDEA

I divide men into three groups – wankers, dads, and rapists.

Wankers need a mum, dads treat us like children, and rapists want to fuck us whether we like it or not. That's why it's difficult to find a man. We have to decide. To look after someone, to be patronised all the time, or alternatively, to be constantly screwed around with until we're too old and they *move on.*

JASON

I'm not a rapist.

MEDEA It's a metaphor Jason.

JASON Yeah I got that.

MEDEA Well you're certainly not a *dad*. So that just leaves...

Pause. MEDEA cries. Stops herself.

Cries again.

Stops herself.

JASON Okay.

If you need anything, call me, I'll send some money over.

MEDEA I don't want money.

JASON Or somewhere to stay, I could find a place.

MEDEA Not with your friends. I hate your friends. They're fat. All of them, really big. Because they're greedy. Get back to your girl. It's past her bedtime and I'm sure you want to get one in before the wedding.

JASON I want you to find a way to be happy.

MEDEA Go on. Go. Get married.

It'll be a disaster.

He looks at her, then goes.

MEDEA stands for a moment. She nearly cries. Then pulls herself together.

Another wave of tears – she stops herself. Grabs hold of a bush and rips a handful of leaves out.

SARAH appears from next door with a large glass of white wine, slightly drunk.

Behind her the sound of the TV plays a Bernard Herrmann soundtrack.

SARAH staggers towards MEDEA, half-smiling.

MEDEA looks at her.

SARAH Do you want some wine? We've got one on the go. We're watching a movie. It's scary. You'd like it. There's blood.
She laughs. MEDEA goes back inside the house.
What are you doing?
SARAH watches her, laughs, then goes back inside. The sound of the TV continues.

Scene Two

TOM's bedroom.

TOM is in bed, with the bedside lamp on playing his game.

MEDEA comes into the room and stands watching him.

The sound of the TV next door plays a Bernard Herrmann soundtrack. It's moving, and epic, becoming terrifying.

MEDEA moves forward and sits on the bed near TOM.

She takes the game off him and puts it on the side.

Strokes his head.

Then tucks him in, and switches off the light.

She goes, leaving the room.

TOM switches back on the light, picks up his game.

A moment.

MEDEA comes back into the room.

She takes the game off TOM, puts it on the floor and smashes it with a chair.

She hits it and hits it – it splinters into little bits. A bit goes in her leg.

She stops for a moment. Then keeps going.

Then she switches off the light and leaves.

The music soars – huge – as she comes down the stairs to the living room, and leans against a wall, staring out the window.

Meanwhile, TOM switches the lamp back on, goes to a drawer, pulls out another computer game, and starts playing.

Scene Three

The front garden. 12.30 a.m. Moonlight.

MEDEA still stares out the window.

ANDREW enters. He's fifty-seven, suited, middle-class, with a suitcase on wheels. He's about to go inside, when he thinks better of it. Puts the case by the door, then goes and sits on his front wall, gets out some cigarettes.

MEDEA comes out.

MEDEA Hi.

He turns and sees her.

ANDREW You. Look at you!

She goes to him, kisses him on the cheek. Then they hug.

How are you?

MEDEA Been better.

ANDREW I heard.

MEDEA Maggie told you.

ANDREW She emailed. Kept me updated. When's the wedding?

MEDEA Tomorrow.

ANDREW I'm sorry. But you weren't happy were you? With him.

MEDEA Yes.

ANDREW You never looked it.

MEDEA We were.

ANDREW Perhaps you're better off.

MEDEA You don't smoke.

ANDREW I'm allowed to smoke when I'm away on business that's my rule. But not at home. So this is the last one. When I cross the border, that's it.

MEDEA You've been gone ages.

ANDREW Morocco for eight weeks.

MEDEA Morocco?

ANDREW It's an emerging market, we're setting up systems – you don't care –

MEDEA No.

ANDREW Anyway then on the way back I stopped off at the house in Spain. We're having a pool done. It's my latest go to tempt Maggie out there. Spend all this money on a holiday home then she never wants to go. Says she'll get a disease.

MEDEA What disease? It's Spain.

ANDREW Spanish flu?

She's anxious, and not sleeping. It's mainly the business that keeps her here. It's taken off and she says she can't leave it. An obsession. So she never goes out there.

MEDEA You'd like her to.

ANDREW That was the whole idea – we were driving through the countryside and we saw it, with a sign outside and we said do you think it might be possible so we parked up, knocked on the door and they let us in, gave us a drink, showed us round, and it's beautiful, everything you could want and the two of us, we dreamed about owning it. Six months later it all went through, but by that point – I don't know – she said she was pleased but –

She never talked about it really. Never shows much interest.

I don't mind really. Gives me a place to get away, on my own. Every man needs that...

I like the trees. The trees there at night, they rustle in the air, you can sit out all night.

And think.

MEDEA Sounds good.

ANDREW *gets out his iPhone. Finds the pictures. Hands it to MEDEA.*

ANDREW There.

She takes it and looks at the pictures.

The pool's going round the side, there, so you still have the view.

It's not a big house but it's...

She flicks through a few pictures.

How's Tom taking it all?

MEDEA He doesn't talk to me. I don't talk to him.

She gives him back the phone.

Can I have one of those?

ANDREW You don't.

MEDEA I've started.

ANDREW Not good for you.

MEDEA Gets me out of the house.

He gives her one.

Nick Carter says I have to leave by tomorrow.

ANDREW Could've seen that coming too. Where are you going to go?

MEDEA ...

ANDREW

MEDEA You want children don't you?

ANDREW What?

MEDEA You always have.

ANDREW How do you – I never told anyone – I never –

MEDEA How old is she –

ANDREW Maggie? Forty-one this year –

MEDEA The clock's ticking.

ANDREW Yes

MEDEA But she's not keen.

ANDREW ...

MEDEA And you're desperate for a little one. As you get older –

ANDREW How do you –

MEDEA I know things.

Beat.

ANDREW She doesn't want to discuss it but – We've tried. We used to anyway. Now she's too busy. Maybe she knows she can't and – There was... we had tests. They said it was her and they went over things that could be done, things she could do but she didn't...

She's not maternal I don't think.

She used to be. But something must've happened, and she lost all the desire for it.

Yes. I think of having a son. Or a daughter. What it would be like.

MEDEA

ANDREW It must be wonderful. It must make up for everything that's going on, to know that you've got that astonishing little boy.

Pause.

MEDEA I hurt my leg.
She lifts it up to show him.
I smashed up Tom's game and a bit of it went in. It was bleeding for ages.

ANDREW You should put something on it.

MEDEA Don't have anything.

ANDREW We've got a bandage I'm sure, inside.

MEDEA No your wife'll come out. I'd rather bleed to death.

ANDREW She's not that bad.

MEDEA She hates me.

ANDREW She doesn't.

MEDEA She's having a wall built.

ANDREW That's not to do with you.

MEDEA I tore up her flowers, it's all to do with me.
He looks at her. Then reaches out and touches her leg.

ANDREW Ouch.

MEDEA Ouch.
Pause.
What am I to you?

ANDREW To you? What are you? You mean...
You're...
You're our neighbour.

MEDEA Am I like a daughter to you is that what you think I am?

ANDREW What?

MEDEA Because there's only, what, a few years between us, fifteen years?

ANDREW Not a daughter no I don't think of you like that. You're a friend.

MEDEA You do think of me though. Don't you?

ANDREW I was worried about you when Maggie told me what was happening.

MEDEA That's not what I mean.

ANDREW What do you mean?

MEDEA I've seen how you smile at me in the mornings I remember when you used to go to work I knew what that meant.

ANDREW It didn't mean anything.

MEDEA Yeah come on you know.

ANDREW Friendly.

MEDEA Yeah right friendly exactly, friendly not like friends though is it?

She touches his face.

Friendly like – oh shit –

ANDREW Look –

MEDEA I'm not very good at this.

ANDREW It's late, you're going through a lot, shall we call it a night?

MEDEA No, okay, stop, here's the deal you want a son, I need somewhere to go how about I live in your house in Spain, your wife she doesn't need to know she never goes there, so Tom and I that's where we go, and he goes to school there and starts talking again and becomes bilingual a major bonus in today's globalised world, particularly Spanish a fast-growing tongue, speaking of which whenever you visit we can have sex and I give you a child. You won't have a problem with me, I'm Mrs Fertile, I make babies like most women buy shoes, I've had abortions, three, one before Tom, two afterwards, I'm telling you, it's like a factory in there, they keep on coming, so assuming the problem isn't you

he'll be born in a matter of months and grow up there with a brother and a mother, and if your wife ever finds out about me, she certainly doesn't ever need to know about who his father is. It's a win-win. Guilt-free. Everything you're not getting from her you get from me and I get the sun.

And far away from here.

ANDREW Medea –

MEDEA It would work.

ANDREW Did you just think of all that?

MEDEA Yeah – Forget what I was saying before we don't need to feel anything, I know it sounds exploitative but I'm a modern woman exercising my options and making a choice.

What do you think?

ANDREW ...

MEDEA What do you think?

We get on.

It could work.

I'm serious.

ANDREW Are you?

MEDEA Yes.

But I need to know now. I have to be gone by tomorrow evening. I need an answer.

ANDREW We can't. Medea. I don't even know you.

Not really.

MEDEA I could go there at least I could go there for now while you think about it.

I know we don't know each other that well, but actually I don't know anyone that well any more. You're the best I've got.

Please.

You've just come back from the house. You've got the key in your pocket.

ANDREW smiles. Puts out his cigarette. Reaches into his pocket, gets out his keys and unwinds the right one.

ANDREW There's only the front door lock. That's all you need.
I'll email you the details.

MEDEA Yeah. Good.

ANDREW Can't believe I'm doing this.
Beat.

MEDEA When's the pool finished?

ANDREW Two months.

They smile at each other.

He leans over, kisses her on the cheek, turns and goes inside.

MEDEA sits.

Time passes.

MEDEA texts someone.

Time passes.

Then SARAH emerges with a glass of wine, quite drunk.

SARAH Did he just kiss you?

MEDEA puts her hand out for the glass. SARAH smiles, confused, and gives it to her.

She drinks.

MEDEA You know what I'm doing?

SARAH No.

MEDEA I'm witching. It's like bitching but weirder. It's scheming, it's conjuring and voodoo and telling the future. He's going to die. Jason's going to come to a very bad end.

SARAH You always say that.

MEDEA He's going to turn up for his wedding day and find his bride stuck like a pig in her dress going round and round, with the guests held at gunpoint forced to eat burgers made from her thighs.

 No – I'll make her have sex with her father while Jason watches. Or I'll make him have sex with her father while she watches.

 No –

SARAH Shut up.

MEDEA You don't like it go away I'm on my land. Okay, I'll kill Tom and send him in pieces to the wedding. Individually wrapped.

 I'll make presents for her that she'll – Okay.

 Yeah.

 Yeah.

SARAH What?

MEDEA No you wanted me to shut up I'm shutting up that's what I'm doing. You don't want to know, goodbye goodbye.

 SARAH *goes back to her house.*

Scene Four

MEDEA *checks her stars on her phone. She waits.*

Time passes.

Scene Five

2.30 a.m.

MEDEA *looks up at the stars.*

JASON *appears.*

JASON Forgiven?

MEDEA You know the stars.

JASON Yeah I've seen them –

MEDEA I mean astrology. It's rubbish I know but every day recently I check online for my prediction and it's always bad. Awful. It says today's going to contain a sadness, a friend betrays you, a difficult decision awaits. I look at the others and they're positive and negative in equal measure, but Aries, for the last six months, Aries is bad every single time. I started to think you were fixing it somehow, just to get at me, but I know that's stupid.

You ever think it's all pre-prepared? No, preordained.

You believe in fate?

JASON No.

MEDEA That this was always going to happen.

JASON No.

MEDEA No. Anyway, I couldn't sleep so I checked my stars, and this time it said 'a change for the better', 'the past is left behind' and that's the most positive prediction I've had for a long time, and then I realised, it was all finished. At last, I'd let it go.

Yes. I forgive you.

JASON And to celebrate you invite me over.

MEDEA How's the bride?

JASON At home. It's the night before the wedding.

MEDEA You always liked tradition.

JASON I never wanted to hurt you.

MEDEA I believe that.

JASON Really?

MEDEA

Beat.

JASON I still don't know –

MEDEA What?

JASON When you're honest.

MEDEA Doesn't matter now does it? That's the best thing for you, about all this, isn't it? You never need to worry about me ever again.

JASON Of course I'll worry about you.

MEDEA I mean in the future you'll never need to trust me.

When you were standing there earlier you looked good – especially when you got annoyed, I mean come on the more we went at it, the more there was something – zzzzt zzzzt *electric* going on between us, even after everything, something chemical I thought so – anyway, I wondered if you wanted to say goodbye.

JASON What?

MEDEA Yeah.

JASON Medea.

MEDEA We've got nothing to lose either of us, at the moment you're still technically single, so am I, there's no reason not to, we're both adults and it'll be good. It always was.

JASON Is this a game of yours? Are you going to wait until I've got my clothes off and then point and laugh?

MEDEA No.

JASON Like you did before.

MEDEA Yeah okay I admit that was a low point, no I'm not going to laugh.

 This is what I need.

 I think we'll both feel better.

Beat.

JASON Some female spiders eat their male counterparts after copulation.

MEDEA That's exactly what I had in mind.

JASON Yes.

MEDEA Yes. I'm going to eat you. Take your shirt off.

JASON Here?

MEDEA Yeah.

He does. She goes and touches him. Kisses him.

 I was lying.

 I still hate you.

JASON I know.

She leads him into the house.

As they climb the stairs, TOM wakes up, stands in the middle of the room and listens.

MEDEA and JASON go into her bedroom.

MEDEA Wait.

She puts on some music, quietly.

They fall on the bed, and kiss.

Fade.

ACT THREE

Scene One

The curtains are open – in contrast to before, the whole place has a bright sunny feeling.

JASON is sat anxiously in the front room waiting.

Upstairs, TOM is sat playing on another loud computer game, wearing a suit, as SARAH brushes his hair. She's also dressed for the wedding – and is hungover. The game is driving her mad.

Meanwhile, MEDEA is putting the presents into larger bags.

SARAH Tom?

Tom?

Tom do you mind turning that down?

It's just I'm not feeling that well this morning.

Got a headache.

He doesn't respond.

Tom?

She's annoyed now.

Can I just...

She takes it –

How do you turn down the...?

She switches a button. The whole thing stops suddenly.

Oh. Well... There.

She gives it back to him.

That's better isn't it?

TOM *puts the game down.* SARAH *brushes his hair.*

MEDEA *enters with the bags.*

MEDEA All right? What do you think of his suit? Pam got it for me last week, I like the little waistcoat.

SARAH Are you sure you want him to go?

MEDEA Absolutely.

SARAH You said you didn't.

MEDEA I can't live like this forever, and Jason's his father.

SARAH Just the ceremony.

MEDEA Yes let him see it, you go to the reception he gives them the presents and then says his goodbyes. We've got to be packed up and gone by the end of the day.

SARAH Where are you going?

MEDEA Don't let him drink alcohol.

SARAH Of course not.

MEDEA Or eat too much.

SARAH He doesn't eat enough if you ask me. Medea. Where are you going?

MEDEA What?

SARAH Where are you going?

MEDEA Doesn't matter.

Beat.

Come on. You'll be late. Tom, put your coat on.

SARAH *stays and helps TOM with his coat.* MEDEA *leaves and goes down the stairs.*

Sorry to keep you waiting – thanks for coming to pick him up, it's right that he should go there with you, as you can see I've taken your advice, opened the curtains, moved on,

flowers, you were completely right. It was indulgent. Of course he should go to his father's wedding and it's time for me to move out as well, so you'll be pleased to hear that by the evening I'll be off. I wanted you to see, to be reassured. It worked.

SARAH What worked?

TOM and SARAH come down the stairs, TOM now wearing the coat.

JASON Hi Sarah.

SARAH Hi.

JASON How are you?

SARAH Yeah. Fine. You know. It's all right. Is it? If I look after Tom at the wedding.

JASON Of course. I'm pleased he's going to be there.

(To TOM.) Hi.

TOM looks at him.

SARAH He's missed you.

TOM looks at him.

A moment.

MEDEA Tom. Hug your father.

TOM looks at MEDEA.

Go on. We like him now. It's okay. We're friends.

TOM goes and hugs JASON. JASON has missed him.

JASON You all right? You been all right?

He holds him out – looks at him.

I like the suit. You like mine?

TOM doesn't reply.

MEDEA Oh!

MEDEA *cries.*

JASON What? Oh what now? I thought everything was –

MEDEA Sorry. I'm still not. It's...

Sorry.

I had a thought. Tom have you been to the toilet?

TOM *doesn't reply.*

Go to the toilet. Go on. Upstairs.

He does.

SARAH Should I...

MEDEA Do you need the toilet?

SARAH No.

MEDEA Right then.

SARAH – but maybe you want some time –

MEDEA No. Stay there. You can watch. Jason, I want Tom to live with you. You're going to have a family, I'm sure she wants children which means Tom could have brothers to play with and everything you can give him. I'm leaving, going a long way away, I don't know how things are going to be, you know what it's like you're in a much better position, so I thought possibly, he could live with you two. I think he'd be happier.

JASON Kate wants a new start, I don't know if I can ask –

MEDEA They'd get on I'm sure, and once I'm out of the house and forgotten she'll be fine. It's me she's got the problem with.

It would give him a family again.

Beat.

JASON I'll ask.

MEDEA You'd like it.

JASON Of course.

MEDEA You'll ask?

JASON After the wedding yes.

MEDEA How is she? Kate. How's she feeling?

JASON She's worried you'll turn up I think she's nervous you'll do something.

MEDEA Like what?

JASON ...

MEDEA No. I'll be too busy getting ready here. Don't worry I won't be anywhere near your marriage. Tell her it's all my problem, not hers, she's done nothing wrong. I've got some presents for her. I'll give them to Tom, and he can give them to her, afterwards. Sorry I didn't get anything off the list but –

JASON Of course –

MEDEA It's your mother's evening gown, and the tiara. The ones she gave me.

JASON Medea –

MEDEA Your mum said she wanted them for your wife, so I thought I should pass them on and if we're honest I never fitted in the dress and the tiara looked stupid, but I've seen pictures of your Kate and she's exactly the right size. I thought she could wear them at the reception. You know the ones I'm talking about?

JASON Of course.

MEDEA I thought it would be nice if Tom gave them to her, a gesture. I mean he's never even met her before has he? But I wanted to check with you that you didn't think it was weird.

JASON No. Not weird.

MEDEA Good.

JASON Thank you.

MEDEA ...

TOM *comes down the stairs.*

All right then. Off you all go!

MEDEA *opens the door.*

Have a nice time.

JASON Wait.

MEDEA What?

JASON *still doesn't quite trust her. But he turns and they all go outside.*

As they do –

Tom. Here. Take these.

She gives him the two present bags and he goes off with JASON, leaving SARAH.

SARAH You'll be all right, on your own today?

MEDEA Fine. I might give Pam a call.

SARAH Pam?

MEDEA Yeah. She's normally up for a chat at the weekend.

SARAH Pam's going to the wedding.

MEDEA What?

SARAH He invited her. She said she was friends to you both.

MEDEA She was my friend.

SARAH I thought she would've told you.

MEDEA No. But none of my business. Fine. Okay. Fine. Anyway. Have a good time. I've got stuff to do.

Got to pack. Go on. Go. You'll be late. Go.

SARAH *walks off and MEDEA waves.*

*Once they've gone, she stops for a moment. The
WORKMAN is next door.*

They stare at each other for a long time. Then –

WORKMAN Don't.

They look at each other.

MEDEA goes back inside.

Scene Two

MEDEA's bedroom.

*MEDEA puts a suitcase out on the bed. Opens it. Goes to her wardrobe –
Looks at it all.*

Shuts the door again.

Zips the bag up and puts it away. Walks downstairs.

In the living room.

She gets the remote and switches on the television. Watches.

ACT FOUR

Scene One

Outside the house.

As SARAH and TOM arrive, MEDEA comes out of the house.

MEDEA Hello! How was it?

SARAH Oh – amazing! I mean it was a big thing, church wedding, very traditional then on to this hotel, Cranbrook, do you know it –

MEDEA The house.

SARAH Cranbrook House that's it.

MEDEA We used to go for tea there sometimes.

SARAH Well that's where it was and I mean they'd really gone to town. Sorry you probably don't want to hear this.

MEDEA It's fine.

SARAH Well it was very nice anyway, but as you wanted we gave Kate the presents didn't we – I think Jason had told her to expect something, so as soon as she arrived at Cranbrook, we gave them to her and he explained what they were.

MEDEA She liked them?

SARAH She was very touched. I don't think she – well. She's still not your biggest fan as you can imagine, but – then Jason asked her – you know – about...

MEDEA Tom go inside please, play your game.

He does.

SARAH Jason asked about Tom staying with them, and she loved the idea. She said she thought he was a sweet boy. And that perhaps you were better off on your own. Making a new

start. That for whatever reason this place was bringing you down, and maybe Tom and Jason and her were all part of that and it would be better for everyone but particularly you, if you could leave free of all of it, and start again. Not have the stigma of being a single mum.

MEDEA Thoughtful.

SARAH She doesn't know what she's talking about really and she was flush with all of it of course, but the point is, he can live with them. And that's what you wanted isn't it?

That is what you asked him for, in the end. I heard you.

MEDEA is crying. From inside, the faint sound of a computer game.

What?

MEDEA It's really good of you to take him along.

SARAH It was a pleasure.

MEDEA I need to get on now.

SARAH Do you want a hand?

MEDEA We have to leave by six.

SARAH Are you dropping Tom off?

MEDEA What?

SARAH At Jason's?

MEDEA Oh.

SARAH You could leave him with me if that's –

MEDEA Yes.

SARAH If that's easier?

MEDEA Yes. Yes. I'll do that. Thank you. Can you go now?

MEDEA opens the door.

SARAH Right. Well. We'll see you in a couple of hours then.

MEDEA Yes. Bye.

SARAH leaves and MEDEA quickly shuts the door.

Scene Two

TOM's bedroom.

TOM sits on the bed, with the duvet up round him.

MEDEA enters.

Pause.

MEDEA When did you stop talking? I can't remember.

Was it that night when your dad and me shouted at each other, when I held that knife up and he was swearing then we saw you watching on the stairs? Or was it when he left?

Perhaps you never spoke. All children sound the same really don't they? I can't remember the sound of your voice. I remember the things you said. 'What's that?' 'Mummy.' 'Please don't say mummy and daddy I'm grown up now.' You were always polite. I like that.

I do love you Tom. I know you don't think I do but –

Maybe I –

Look at me. Look at me sweetheart.

He does. She hugs him.

Come here. Come here. I know it's been difficult. You're so small. You look to us, I know you look to us for guidance to know how to be in the world, but it's probably important to say that we don't know, adults don't know what they're doing at all, they never have, and the only thing you learn as you get older is how short life is, and how you've already messed up more of it than you've got left.

She lets him go.

You look a bit like him. Don't you. You've got his hair.

She touches his face.

Anyway, there's some news. You're not going to be living with me any more. I don't know if this is a good thing to you, because I haven't got a clue what you think about anything these days, but we're going to move out of the house and you're going to move in with Daddy, sorry, Dad, and Kate. In their big new house. Would you like that? Because that's what's going to happen. And maybe they'll have another child, a brother or a sister, like you always wanted, and they're going to get richer and richer over the next ten years so you're going to have everything you could want. And you won't see your mum again.

What do you think about that?

I'd be really sad if my mum said that to me.

I wouldn't want her to go.

Tom.

I don't think you're going to have a good life. With your father, I think you're going to be brought up in a terrible way, in a way that places emphasis on success, and winning and money and nothing else. In a really stupid way that puts power over intelligence. What would you rather be now? Powerful or clever?

At least you're not a woman.

Pause.

You're not going to be happy with him are you?

You want to stay with your mummy.

She stands up.

Moves away.

All right. We'll stick together. You and me.

We're better off without him, aren't we?

TOM gets off the bed, and hugs MEDEA, tightly.

She has a moment. Then hugs him back.

Outside – PAM arrives – screaming –

PAM *Medea! Medea!*

MEDEA leaves.

Scene Three

The front garden.

PAM is there. She's come from the car, dressed for a wedding. She's fraught.

MEDEA opens the door and comes out. Over the next, SARAH emerges from next door.

PAM It was you, wasn't it? You always said you could do things I thought it was your thing your joke.

SARAH What's going on?

MEDEA What happened?

PAM You know what happened! What happened was exactly what you planned, the presents, Tom gave them to her, as soon as they arrived at the reception, it was beautifully choreographed by Jason. Tom went up to her, gave them the boxes and kissed her on the cheek, and Jason explained they were his mother's from her wedding day and they had been given by you and all was good. Kate smiled and opened the boxes and the tiara had the diamonds and the dress was beautiful, so much more beautiful than the one she was wearing, and everyone said 'Put it on, put it on' so she giggled, really pleased, and off she went, and everyone waited with anticipation, it was then that Sarah took Tom off, so she doesn't know what happened next.

SARAH No. No I don't –

PAM

Kate appeared at the top of the stairs, in this dress this beautiful, like, *gown* it must have been from the fifties, and wearing a tiara that *gleamed* properly sparkled and they had plaited her hair around it and the dress fitted perfectly, tightly to her figure and she's got a good figure and I'll tell you when she was there at the top of the stairs in that moment every woman watching thought, 'I give up, I have never looked that beautiful, I will never look that beautiful,' and she walked down the stairs to Jason and they started to play music, and none of this was in the plan but the two of them started to dance, to this jazz music played live – all the music was live of course – but after a while, she started to seem, uncomfortable, and she asked to stop, we could see, I was close to her and we could see she was sweating, and itching... then her legs gave way, and she fell back into a chair, and she was completely, like, white now? White as the dress. Someone shouted for a doctor. People tried to get to her to help but stood back when they saw this white foam, froth, coming out of her mouth, her eyes rolling back in the sockets, her arms starting to like punch out, stopping anyone getting too close, and then we all saw that the tiara, that you gave her, it was making red marks in her head, she scratched at herself to get it off, but it was burning, into her head. A bridesmaid tried to take it off her but it was so tightly plaited, and then Kate lurched forward, vomiting all over the dance floor, then fell over and screamed, screamed like you've never heard anyone before, more than childbirth, more than anything I've heard, crying screeching for help, the dress itself was eating away at her, underneath, and the tiara was pressing into her forehead, blood rolling down her face which was all swollen up, so you couldn't recognise her. People didn't know what to do – Jason stood back, shocked, he didn't touch her but then her dad, who'd been outside, he ran in, and went straight to his daughter, he knelt down and hugged her on the ground saying 'What's happened?', and she was still crying, sort of moaning, and then he – her father – he tried to get up to get help, but he found the dress was

stuck to him, and he couldn't move away, and she was holding on to him, the dress burning him now, he tried to get up, but the dress was tearing his skin off and he tried and tried to get up but both of them got tired, from wrestling on the floor and then they both stopped moving, not breathing any more, they were both dead.

Beat.

SARAH You're making it up. This is something you'd agreed with Jason you don't think she'll leave and –

PAM gets out her phone, finds the file.

– you want to *scare* her into going, I thought you were her friend.

PAM presses play and gives it to SARAH.

We hear jazz music, a happy crowd. Then heavy breathing, panic, and then just screaming, coming out of the tiny speakers – SARAH watches.

PAM I ran out of there, to my car, and I came here, because I know it was you –

The video finishes.

– you did something to that dress and the tiara and the police are going to get you and you'll be locked away forever like you should be but I wanted to say that nothing that happened to you justifies that nothing.

She slaps MEDEA.

You're not mad are you?

MEDEA No.

PAM You're not ill, or deranged or depressed.

MEDEA No.

PAM

MEDEA

PAM Are you going to run away? They'll be here in seconds.

SARAH Medea...

MEDEA turns and goes back inside the house, locking the door.

A moment.

Then –

Where's Tom?

In there?

PAM Not our problem. I'm calling the police.

She does.

ACT FIVE

Scene One

TOM is in bed.

MEDEA takes a knife from the kitchen and goes upstairs.

TOM hears her coming and stands.

MEDEA enters the bedroom, sees TOM, turns, and walks out again, back down to the kitchen.

She panics.

Is nearly sick.

TOM follows her and watches her from the bottom of the stairs. Then runs back up to his room.

MEDEA follows with the knife.

Scene Two

Outside. The front garden.

The WORKMAN is making a noise trying to get in the door.

SARAH is standing. PAM is on the phone.

PAM Thank you, yes, yes –

Yeah.

Yeah.

Thank you. Bye.

They're on their way.

A moment. They wait.

JASON *arrives, his clothes with blood on them.*

PAM Oh.

JASON Where is she? In there?

PAM Jason. I'm so sorry.

He stops and cries. Can't go on for a moment.

PAM goes to him. Wants to hug him, but it's awkward.

She reaches out and puts an arm round him.

Suddenly JASON turns on SARAH.

JASON Did you know? Did you know what was going to happen?

SARAH No.

JASON You took the presents – you carried the bags –

SARAH I didn't –

JASON You let her put on the dress, you let her dance, and then –

SARAH I'm sorry.

JASON Then she...

She...

JASON stands and screams up at the house.

Medea!

Pause.

Medea!

SARAH Tom's in there.

JASON He...

SARAH He went inside, and she's double-locked the door.

A moment.

JASON What did she say to you? What else did she say before they went inside?

But there's a hacking sound – a crashing and a breaking.

What?

Tiles and rubble seem to fall – smoke and dust pouring down the stairs – and then –

The roof tiles fly off from the top of the house. Breaking through is MEDEA, with an axe. She has a stereo with her playing music.

Oh God! Oh...

She climbs through and pushes on to the roof. Then she reaches down, and pulls TOM up to lie next to her. Puts the stereo at her feet.

MEDEA This was my dad's axe. Only thing I've got left of his.

He travelled a lot but when he came home he liked nothing more than chopping animals to bits. For fun. I don't think you ever knew that.

Tom's dead.

JASON flings himself at the house.

You can't get in and if you could it's too late anyway, you wanted to help you should have shown him you *cared*.

JASON This had nothing to do with me, I love my son. I wanted him to live with us. / I hated being away from him –

MEDEA No! You didn't want him, you threw everything of his away, his happiness, his voice, his home, his trust. You made life mean nothing. We put everything in you and you walked out on us.

JASON I can't... I can't!... no...

MEDEA Shut up.

JASON, utterly distraught, sits on the ground.

I loved coming home and we'd all worked hard all three of us, at the end of a long day and we'd be here in the house we

wanted, this house, the house you'd found and I'd got an apron that you'd wear whenever you'd cook and we'd open the back door to let the evening air in, and we'd sit round, and tell each other about our days and he learned what a good father he had and a hard-working mother, and he was growing up to be something special, and life meant something. I loved him then. I loved him then.

I'm going to Spain, I'm going to Spain with him, and in the sun I'm going to bury him under a tree, and he's going to always be remembered for the maths test, for coming second in the egg-and-spoon race at playgroup, for the picture he drew of his daddy coming home in his new car, and there will be a headstone that will say his name that we gave him.

This morning I still believed in God. I thought he gave us a house and a world and happiness and life. But now I know there's nothing.

Nothing except these bricks and that road and life and death and the waiting in between.

And unless he wants to appear right now, and sort this out, I'm going to Spain.

So.

God?

God.

Now's your chance.

A long pause.

Light breaks through cloud.

Sirens.

Blackout.

MIKE BARTLETT

Mike Bartlett is a multi-award-winning playwright and screenwriter.

His plays include *Scandaltown* (Lyric Hammersmith, London); *The 47th* (The Old Vic, London/Sonia Friedman Productions/Annapurna Theatre); *Mrs Delgado* (Arts at the Old Fire Station, Oxford/Theatre Royal Bath/Oxford Playhouse), *Snowflake* (Arts at the Old Fire Station/Kiln Theatre, London); *Albion* (Almeida Theatre, London, also filmed for BBC Four); *Wild* (Hampstead Theatre, London); *Game* (Almeida); *King Charles III* (Almeida/West End/Broadway; Critics' Circle Award for Best New Play, Olivier Award for Best New Play, Tony Award nomination for Best Play); *An Intervention* (Paines Plough/Watford Palace Theatre); *Bull* (Sheffield Theatres/Young Vic Theatre, London/Off-Broadway; TMA Best New Play Award, Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre); *Medea* (Glasgow Citizens/Headlong/Watford Palace); *Chariots of Fire* (based on the film; Hampstead/West End); *13* (National Theatre, London); *Love, Love, Love* (Paines Plough/Plymouth Drum/Royal Court Theatre, London; TMA Best New Play Award); *Earthquakes in London* (Headlong/National Theatre); *Cock* (Royal Court/Off-Broadway, Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre; revived in the West End); *Artefacts* (nabokov/Bush Theatre, London); *Contractions* and *My Child* (Royal Court).

Bartlett has received BAFTA nominations for his television series *The Town* (ITV) and *Doctor Foster* (Drama Republic/BBC), for which he won Outstanding Newcomer for British Television Writing at the British Screenwriters' Awards 2016. His screen adaptation of his play *King Charles III* aired on BBC Two in 2017, and his other television series include *Life* (BBC One), *Sticks and Stones* and *Trauma* (both Tall Story Pictures for ITV), and *Press* (Lookout Point for BBC One). Bartlett has also written several plays for radio, winning the Writers' Guild Tinniswood and Imison Prizes for *Not Talking*.

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